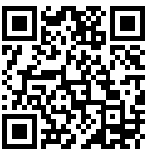
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

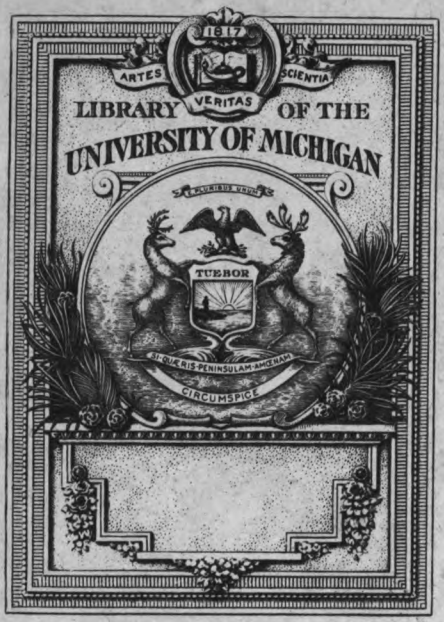
Google™ books

https://books.google.com



A 549383

Digitized by Google



THE GIFT OF
J.H.Russell

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

6/
BT
75
.M43

Gift of
James H. Russell

Digitized by Google

NATURAL ELEMENTS OF REVEALED THEOLOGY

BEING

The Baird Lecture for 1881



BY THE

REV. GEORGE MATHESON, D.D.
MINISTER OF INNELLAN

LONDON
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET
1881

Digitized by Google

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Digitized by Google

Gift
J H Russell
6-14-33

EXCERPT *from the* DEED OF TRUST *by* JAMES BAIRD, ESQ., *in favour of the Trustees of the* 'BAIRD TRUST.'

'Whereas, at the Meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, held in May 1872, I declared my intention to found a Lectureship, to be called "The Baird Lecture," for the illustration and the defence of the vital truths hereinbefore referred to, as well as for the promotion of Christian knowledge and Christian work generally, and for the exposure and refutation of all error and unbelief, under which foundation the Reverend Robert Jamieson, D.D., lately Moderator of the General Assembly, was to be the first Lecturer, and that for the spring of the year 1873: Therefore, and for the endowment of the said Lectureship, I appoint my said Trustees to hold an annual sum of £220 out of the revenue of the funds under their charge for the purposes of said Lectureship; and I direct that the following shall be the conditions and terms on which my said Trustees shall carry out my foundation of said Lectureship:—

'1. The Lecturer shall be a minister of the foresaid Church of Scotland who shall have served the cure of a parish for not less than five years, or a minister of any other of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches who shall have served as pastor of a congregation for a similar period in his own church; and in making the appointment, care shall be taken by the Trustees to choose a man of piety, ability, and learning, and who is approved and reputed sound in all the essentials of Christian truth, as set forth in the statement hereinbefore written of what is meant by sound religious principles.

'2. The Lecturer shall be appointed annually in the month of April by my said Trustees, and the appointment shall be made at a meeting of the Trustees to be called for the purpose, and held in Glasgow.

'3. The Lecturer shall deliver a course of not less than Six Lectures on any subject of Theology, Christian Evidences, Christian Work, Christian Missions, Church Government, and Church Organizations, or on such subject relative thereto as the Trustees shall from year to year fix in concert with the Lecturer.

Digitized by Google

'4. The Lectures shall be duly advertised to the satisfaction of the Trustees, at the cost of the Lecturer, and shall be delivered publicly at any time during the months of January and February in each year, in Glasgow, and also, if required, in such other one of the Scottish University towns as may from time to time be appointed by the Trustees.

'5. The Lectures of each year shall be published, if possible, before the meeting of the next General Assembly, or at latest within six months of the date when the last of the course shall have been delivered. Such publication to be carried out at the sight and to the satisfaction of the Trustees, but by the Lecturer at his own cost and risk, and to the extent of not less than 750 copies, of which there shall be deposited, free, two copies in the Library of each of the Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and St. Andrews, two copies in the Library of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and one copy in each of the Theological Libraries connected with the said Universities, and twenty copies shall be put at the disposal of the Trustees. The price of publication to be regulated by the Trustees in concert with the Lecturer.'

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

If we offered this book to the public as an exhaustive work on a vast subject, it would justly be deemed slight and superficial. We do not so offer it. We have simply complied with a request to deliver an instituted course of lectures, and we publish them in obedience to the law. The aim of these pages is not to trace a historical development. It is rather to look at Christianity as a completed whole, and to analyse it, as far as it will admit of analysis, into its component pre-Christian parts. In tracing the connection of these parts, we have sought no order of time. We have not tried to show that one ancient system has grown out of another, but that the need which one neglects has been appropriated by another. The unity we have sought to exhibit is not a unity reached by historical reactions, but the unity of a common idea, which must ultimately enfold all the isolated fragments, however scattered in time and space. We are far from having satisfied our own ideal of what ought

Digitized by Google

to have been done; yet, inadequate as our effort has been, it has cost us much reading and more thought. The authors to whom we have been mainly indebted are those to whom reference is made in the Appendix.

G. M.

INNELLAN.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
LECTURE I.—CHRISTIANITY AND NATURE, . . .	1
LECTURE II.—THE FIRST PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM, . .	30
LECTURE III.—THE SECOND PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM, .	60
LECTURE IV.—THE THIRD PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM, .	94
LECTURE V.—NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION, ...	132
LECTURE VI.—IMMORTALITY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION,	168

APPENDIX.

NOTE I., ...	201
NOTE II., ...	207
NOTE III., ...	212
NOTE IV., ...	219
NOTE V., ...	220
NOTE VI., ...	226
NOTE VII., ...	231
NOTE VIII., ...	232
NOTE IX., ...	236
NOTE X., ...	237
NOTE XI., ...	243
NOTE XII., ...	247
NOTE XIII., ...	250
NOTE XIV., ...	256

Digitized by Google

PAGE

NOTE XV., ... 261

NOTE XVI., ... 264

NOTE XVII., ... 266

NOTE XVIII., ... 270

NOTE XIX., ... 276

NOTE XX., ... 279

NOTE XXI., ... 286

Digitized by Google

NATURAL ELEMENTS OF REVEALED THEOLOGY.

LECTURE I.

CHRISTIANITY AND NATURE.

OUR design in these lectures is to ascertain to what extent the doctrines of revealed religion have a basis in the natural instincts of the human mind.[1] There are two classes of men with whom their title will find little sympathy,—those who deny the possibility of uniting, and those who deny the possibility of distinguishing, the natural and the revealed. The former class is represented by the Ultramontanist, the latter by the extreme Rationalist. The Ultramontanist regards faith as the antithesis of reason; he practically says, in the spirit of Tertullian, 'I believe, because it is impossible.' The elements of supernatural religion derive to him their value

[1] The phrase '*revealed* religion' takes for granted that it has somewhere a contact with nature.

1.2

Digitized by Google

from the fact that they are *un*natural, that they are not only beyond the range of natural discovery, but beyond the reach of natural appreciation even when discovered. To him, therefore, the attitude of revelation towards nature is and can only be an attitude of antagonism; the new law exists by the abrogation of the old. The Rationalist, on the other hand, approaches the subject from precisely the opposite side. To him nature is everything; and by nature, of course, he understands that special system of laws in which at present he has his being. He is perfectly willing to regard Christianity as the very highest evolution of the human consciousness; but then he must be allowed to regard it *as* an evolution. He will concede to it all imaginable attributes of greatness; but he insists that in return it will consent to take its place as only the latest flower of the seed of humanity, that it will agree to assign its perfections not to the introduction of any new principle, but simply and entirely to the natural growth and development of the unaided powers and faculties of the human mind. To him, also, there is an antagonism between the fact of nature and the idea of revelation. The only difference between him and the Ultramontanist is this, that while the Ultramontanist makes revelation an unattainable fact, he contents himself with making it an unrealizable idea.

Now, the moment we have stated these alternatives, we become conscious that we have not exhausted the

Digitized by Google

question that even from the standpoint of human reason there is conceivable a third and intermediate supposition. What if that which we call the flower of humanity should in reality be its root? what if that which we designate its climax should be really the principle which underlies all creation? When we have traced the development of the visible creation from its lowest germ-cell to its culmination in the highest man, we have by no means settled the question of the natural and the supernatural. Should we even succeed in determining the number and order of those links of gradation by which nature has climbed to humanity,—should we be able, without a break, to point to that succession of steps by which the lowest form of organic life has mounted into the highest form of developed manhood,—the question, so far from being solved, will be only started in a new aspect. For what is the question at issue between the natural and the supernatural? It is not whether we are able to trace a series of unbroken links uniting the life of the lowliest to the life of the loftiest being; it is whether, in the procession from the lowliest to the loftiest being, the force of nature has been adequate to act alone. Let it be demonstrated beyond a doubt that Christianity, humanity, spirituality, and all the types of perfect existence, have come to us through the medium of nature, we shall still be compelled to ask, Have they come to us by the force of nature? Is it not clear, on the lowest

Digitized by Google

computation, that there is at least another solution possible? The impelling force may have been that very Christianity, that very humanity, that very spirituality, whose production we are trying to account for. The climax of a great book is probably its last chapter; yet it is almost certain that that which is last in mechanical execution will be first in the thought of the artist. The end of an author's book is the thought which prompts its beginning, the motive of its existence, the force which impels its continuance. The idea is evolved through pen and ink and paper, but it is not evolved *by* pen and ink and paper; these are only the conditions which the idea employs to manifest itself. Evolution means a rolling out. To prove that the spirit of Christianity has been rolled out of nature is not enough to destroy the supernatural; you must prove that the spirit of Christianity was not originally rolled *into* nature. The moment you have conceded the possibility of a force behind the germ-cell propelling it forward on its upward march, and directing the conditions under which it may expand, you have at one and the same instant separated and united the natural and the supernatural, and have found a common meeting-place for the idea of a gradual evolution and the older thought of an immediate, direct creation.

It will be seen that these remarks are chiefly applicable to the spirit of the nineteenth century, but the principle which underlies them is applicable to

Digitized by Google

all centuries. To find the truth of this, let us go back from the standpoint of modern civilisation to the dawn of Christian thought, and let us ask with what eye did opening Christianity itself contemplate the relation of the natural and the supernatural? The epistles of Paul reveal no traces of a knowledge of the difference between evolutionism and creationism. But evolutionism and creationism were not the catch-words of the first Christian century; the corresponding expressions of that century were the terms 'law' and 'grace.' The question between law and grace was in Paul's time precisely what the question between evolution and creation is in ours: it was whether a man could be developed into righteousness by the natural use of his own moral powers, or whether he required the creative influence of a new and a higher life? The Jew was in the position of a moral evolutionist: he thought he could work out his own salvation, and perfect his own character. Paul and the representatives of Gentile Christianity were in the position of creationists: they did not believe that human nature possessed in its own right any such power, and they called upon helpless humanity to evoke the aid of a life above its own. But we want to point out that while Paul and the followers of his school emphasized the necessity of a divine grace, they never dreamed of regarding that grace as the antithesis of nature; they regarded it only as the antithesis of a violated nature, of a nature which had

Digitized by Google

broken its legitimate limits, and required to be restrained by law. It never seemed to Paul that the new element of inspiration which he desired for the world was an element foreign to the human soul: he believed it, on the contrary, to be foreign to that which was itself unnatural to the human soul, though it had taken captive a portion of its being. Grace, the Pauline name for the supernatural, was the antithesis not of humanity but of sin. It came to restore humanity by destroying sin; to re-establish the first harmony between the nature of man and the nature of God, by the reconstruction in a higher form of that Adam who was in the image of God. It came not to awaken a sense of mystery, but to transform the sense of mystery into an intuitive knowledge whereby the spirit of man should become recipient of a region of thought which hitherto had been to him an undiscovered land.

Paul, then, as the representative of New Testament Christology, may be said to occupy a middle position between the Ultramontanist and the Rationalist; he takes something from both, and rejects the exclusive element in each. He holds with the Ultramontanist that there is a life higher than nature; but he holds at the same time with the Rationalist, that no life can enter the human soul which does not act through its natural powers. In opposition to the Ultramontanist, he declares that the things of the spirit may be spiritually *discerned;* in opposition to the

Digitized by Google

Rationalist, he maintains that the human spirit may discern impressions which the human spirit could never have created. 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds,' is one of the many passages in which he expresses at once the transcendence and the immanence of the supernatural. On the one hand, it is above the reach of human discovery; it passeth all understanding, its origin is lost in the mists of a region into which the human eye cannot soar. On the other hand, the moment it has touched the earth it becomes a part of the earth, enters into union with the natural laws of our mental constitution, becomes the guardian of our heart and of our mind; it ceases to be supernatural to that soul within which it dwells. 'To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,' is another of these moral paradoxes which distinguish Christianity from all other religions, and which of all religions Christianity alone can vindicate. A love whose source is essentially outside of nature, and incapable of being reached by nature, is declared to be able to reveal itself to the natural mind. It passeth knowledge, it is beyond the discovery of the human faculties; but it has the power to discover *itself* to these faculties, and the instant it has discovered itself it becomes an object of natural knowledge. Nothing can be more clear than Paul's view of the relation between nature and the supernatural. He tells us in the most unqualified terms, that if we

Digitized by Google

start from the standpoint of natural reason, we shall never by our own efforts scale the heights of Christianity: 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' Yet Paul will not on that account admit that nature is the antithesis of the supernatural: he says that, though the natural man cannot reach up to the things of the Spirit, the spiritual man can reach down to the things of nature. The less cannot comprehend the greater, but the greater includes the less. 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things.' Nature is lower than the supernatural, and therefore it cannot attain it; the supernatural is higher than nature, and therefore it has the power to assimilate it. The mirror would lie for ever in darkness if no light were brought within its range; bring the sunshine into contact with the mirror, and in an instant the mirror will become the other half of the sunshine, its second self, transformed into its own image from glory to glory. One would almost think that such a simile was passing through the mind of the Gentile apostle when he thus expressed the marriage of the natural and the revealed: 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

We shall now be able in some measure to estimate the attitude of Christianity with regard to the two

Digitized by Google

extremes of Rationalism and Ultramontanism. They are both adverse to the idea of revelation. Perhaps, if we were disposed to make a choice, we should say that Ultramontanism is the more adverse. Strictly speaking, the Rationalist only holds that revelation is unnecessary; the Ultramontanist practically declares that revelation is impossible. We say *practically*, for no man would in words so vehemently repudiate such an assertion. The Ultramontanist professes to be, of all men, the man who reverences most the thought of revelation, because he professes to be the member of a Church to which has been specially committed the custody of the divine mysteries. But it is just here that the weak point of the Ultramontanist lies: he identifies the custody of mysteries with the reverence of revelation. The two things, so far from being identical, are mutually exclusive. Revelation is not mystery; it is the mystery made manifest. It means literally the drawing back of a veil. The act of drawing back the veil is the supernatural part of the process; it is too high to be touched by the human hand, and therefore its removal demands the agency of another hand. Yet no sooner is the veil withdrawn than the mystery vanishes. The human spirit recognises the vision not as a new vision, but as that for which unconsciously it has been waiting all along. It bounds to meet it as the normal fulfilment of its destiny. It sees in it not merely the completion of its being, but the only thing by which its

Digitized by Google

being could ever be completed, and it wonders that in all its prophetic instincts it had never conjured up the nature of the coming rest.

All this is involved in Paul's view of revelation. It would have been well if apologetic literature had uniformly rested itself on this Pauline basis. We cannot help thinking that many of our greatest treatises in Protestant apologetics have weakened their permanent value, by admitting that Ultramontane element which the Gentile apostle is so careful to exclude.[1] Perhaps in some respects the greatest work in polemical theology which the eighteenth century produced is Butler's *Analogy of Religion.* Yet it is not too much to say that the value of Butler's work would have been much more lasting if its plan had been based on the Pauline method. So far as it goes it is admirable; but it does not go very far, not certainly beyond the limits of the century which gave it birth. That century was occupied, not so much in proving that Christianity was true, as in showing that its opponents had failed to prove that it was false. Butler accordingly has caught the spirit of his age. His leading design is to show, not so much that Christianity is adapted to the natural instincts of the human mind, as that there is nothing in Christianity which is calculated to shock these instincts. It is true that in his work we occasionally meet with positive adaptations, but

[1] Appendix, Note 1.

Digitized by Google

we feel involuntarily that these are incidental to the plan. The main drift of that plan is to demonstrate that there are no absurdities in the Christian doctrines, and this is effected by the demonstration that every difficulty in the realm of theology is paralleled by a corresponding difficulty in the realm of nature. Such a scheme is perfectly legitimate; and where, as here, it is executed with consummate ability, it cannot fail to be useful. But for the nineteenth century, at least, it is no longer useful as an analogy of religion. When we speak popularly of Butler's analogy between natural and revealed religion, we describe his work by a name which, from the view of our age, is a misnomer. It would be more correct to call it Butler's analogy between the points which are *un*-revealed[1] in theology and the points which are *un*revealed in nature. He attempts to establish, and he has eminently succeeded in establishing, the existence of equal difficulties; but the existence of equal difficulties can no more make a positive religion than the existence of two negatives can make an affirmative. His work amply answered the requirement of his age, which was rather the putting down of an old kingdom than the establishment of a new one, but it no longer fully answers the requirement of ours. Our age is everywhere in search of a science of comparative religion; and by comparative religion

[1] Every Christian doctrine has points beyond experience, which we trust through those within experience (John iii. 12).

Digitized by Google

it means not the discovery of equal difficulties in different modes of worship, but the discovery of points of agreement between separate forms of faith. It seeks especially between the realm of nature and the sphere of revelation to find a common bond of sympathy. It is not content with knowing that the realm of nature presents equal barriers to belief with the sphere of revelation; it wants to know that revelation is in the highest sense natural to the highest type of humanity. It will accept from the lower nature any premonitions however unconscious, any foreshadowings however faint, which it can give of its coming emancipation; but at the very least it claims that when the revelation itself shall appear, it shall appear not as a mystery, not as an element which is foreign to humanity, but as the completion of a broken harmony, a manifestation of the truth, 'commending itself to every man's consciousness in the sight of God.'

Now it is worth while observing that this view of the subject, which is thoroughly Pauline, is at the same time thoroughly in harmony with the best ages of Christendom. It has received the support not only of the most sober Protestantism, but of the palmiest days of the Catholic Church. It was the doctrine of the Lutheran divines of the eighteenth century;[1] it was the doctrine of the most refined and cultured stage of the mediæval world.[2] Remote as it

[1] Appendix, Note 2. [2] Appendix, Note 3.

Digitized by Google

is from the spirit of Ultramontanism, it is essentially the spirit of an older Catholicism. From the days of Augustine, it was the view of the Catholic world that however faith might be opposed to reason in the natural man, it became one with reason in the spiritual man; that however unable the unregenerate soul might be to appreciate supernatural truth, the spirit in the moment of its regeneration was able to naturalize that truth, to find a place for it in the economy of nature, and a ground for it in the constitution of the human soul. 'Faith precedes the intellect,' was the maxim of that early Catholic world: 'believe first, and you will know afterwards.' The harmony of faith and reason is thus not a doctrine of French illuminism nor of German transcendentalism. It is not in any sense the product of modern thought. It is the sober, grave, and reverent utterance of days when human thought did not consider itself free, when men held themselves bound beyond all things to abide by the standards of outward authority, and when a departure from these standards would itself have precluded the examination of any theory. If, then, in these ages of comparative bondage,—if, in the heart of a Church which has always been jealous of the unaided pretensions of human reason,—there has yet been admitted the possibility that the supernatural may unite with nature, the spirit of Protestantism in its turn need not fear to prosecute still further that study which the mediævalist has

Digitized by Google

begun, and to trace more deeply that harmony which the Catholic world has acknowledged.

The question, then, which lies before us is this: Is the Christian revelation the complement of human nature? Looking at the subject from the vantage ground of the Christian standpoint, are we able to say that Christianity has given to nature the very thing she needed? Are we able to recognise in the higher revelation the one element which was wanted to perfect the lower, the one thought whose absence made the natural system incomplete, the one note whose silence caused a jarring in the natural harmony? That is the question we have to consider, and it is an all-important question; upon the answer to it will depend the relation of the natural to the revealed. If it be decided that we have found in Christianity the element which supplies the special need of nature, we shall be driven irresistibly to the conclusion that Christianity is not the antithesis of nature; that which supplies the need of another cannot be its antithesis. Can we discover in Christianity this completing power? Let us not misunderstand the question. It is not whether a human soul, previous to receiving the revelation, can point to those special wants in its nature which such a revelation would supply. The subject of need is a very subtle one. It is not when a man's necessity is deepest that he is in general most conscious of it. A man's need is never so deep as when he has become

Digitized by Google

so habituated to his condition as to be incapable of conceiving its converse. The child who has grown up amidst the pollution of an impure physical atmosphere, will no doubt be subjected to daily discomforts, but they will be nameless discomforts; it will be unable to put its hand upon the secret of its own unrest. To reveal that secret to the child, you must first bring it out of the atmosphere which is physically impure; you must transport it into the fresh air, into the green fields, into the free sunshine. It can only learn the reason of its former restraints by beholding the aspects of unrestrained nature, can only consciously loathe the physically impure by consciously partaking of physical purity. The moral and intellectual worlds follow the same law. The most sinful man is the least sensitive to moral corruption, the most ignorant man is the least conscious of intellectual incapacity. The truth is, that in all departments of life it is only when we taste the good fruit of the tree of knowledge that we really learn the taste of the evil fruit; the reception of the higher life is necessary to reveal to us the inadequacy of the lower.[1] We repeat, then, if we would trace the adaptation of Christianity to the natural instincts of the human mind, we must view that adaptation not from the valley but from the mountain. The test of all adaptation is the supply of need, but it frequently happens that a need cannot

[1] This may partially explain the slow progress of modern missions.

Digitized by Google

definitely be named until the moment of its supply. It will argue nothing against the inadequacy of unaided nature, although men in a state of nature should be unable to put their hand upon the special wants which make their lives defective. It is consistent with all analogy that the higher life should be the true revealer of the lower, and that the contrast of the supplied deficiency should first give to the deficiency a local habitation and a name. It is from the high and pure atmosphere of a Christian consciousness, or, in other words, from the high and pure atmosphere of a completed nature, that we shall best be able to discern the comparative lowliness and meanness of that life of human incompleteness which we dignify by the name of natural.

But there is another preliminary question of vast importance. We have seen that, in tracing the adaptations of Christian theology to the natural instincts of the mind, we must look at the subject from the height of Christianity itself. But if Christianity is to be the *standard* of comparison, what is to be the object of comparison? Where are we to seek for the natural instincts of the mind? Shall we go to those doctrines which have received the name of natural theology? It has been frequently averred by the deist, that if a man possesses natural theology he needs nothing more. But there is a question which lies behind this: Is the science which is popularly called natural theology the un-

Digitized by Google

aided product of nature? So far from being so, we are convinced that in its present form it is simply Christianity with the figure of Christ left out. It is very easy for the modern deist to construct a system which shall almost meet all the wants of the case. He can tell of a loving Father whose only care is for the welfare of His creatures, of a divine government whose leading aim is the promotion and the continuance of happiness, of a providence vast enough to embrace the universe, and minute enough to comprehend the grain of sand. He can point to the prospect of an endless life, to the infinite possibilities of a human soul, and to that line of moral conduct which can render these possibilities infinitely good. He can refer to all this, and ask with complacency if it does not unitedly constitute a religion in whose faith a man might be content to live and die. And assuredly, if the soul has arrived at the conviction of such a faith, it has little left to be desired. But how has it arrived at such a conviction? A loving Father, a universe in reconciliation with God, a divine government of universal benevolence, the prospect of enjoying that government in the ages of an endless future, and the present power of living a life of high and disinterested morality,—these are startling privileges to claim from the unaided light of nature. It is significant that the men who have formed such sublime systems have been moderns. They may have professed to reject the Christian

Digitized by Google

light, but they have enjoyed it before rejecting it; and at no time can they reject that Christian atmosphere in which willingly or unwillingly they live and move and have their being. Perhaps the father of English deism is Lord Herbert of Cherbury, though his deism is of a very lofty type.[1] He has formulated five propositions, which he thinks would be sufficient to constitute the articles of a universal religion,—that there is a God, that God is to be worshipped, that the elements of His worship are piety and morality, that we must repent of sin and cease from it, and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. Four of these propositions would be admitted by every Christian in the same sense in which they are accepted by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, but this is not the sense in which they would be understood by a purely natural theologian. To find the purely natural theologian, we must go back to a time before the Christian advent. The theology of the modern deist is not the theology of the ancient deist. Their God is different, the worship of their God is different, the piety and morality which constitute that worship are different, the rewards and punishments which mark the presence or absence of piety and morality are in their nature essentially different. Nay, it is not too much to say that even that article in which Lord Herbert puts personal penitence in the place of the expiation of wrong, has

[1] Appendix, Note 4.

Digitized by Google

taken rise in his mind from the breath of a Christian atmosphere. A man who has been born into a world where the sense of reconciliation is already an accomplished fact, who has been taught almost from his infancy to look upon God as a Father reconciled to His children, who has learned as the leading doctrine of his creed to contemplate the work of expiation as something in which personally he has no participation, is in a very different position from the man who has been born into a world where the power of evil seems almost equal to the divine power. We shall in the course of these lectures have ample reason to see how strongly the religious opinions of a great part of that ancient world took their rise from this very sense of the unconquerable power of sin, and we may be sure that this portion of heathendom at least would not have made it a doctrine of natural theology, that the only atonement is personal penitence. In the meantime, we have evidence sufficient from individual consciousness to show that the thoughts of God, of immortality, of reward and punishment, of divine worship, and of the piety and morality which make worship acceptable, have in their process of transmission from the old world to the new retained little more than their name.

If, then, we would see the unassisted light of nature, we must go back to an earlier day, the day before the advent of the Cross. If we would know to what extent Christianity is adapted to the actual needs of

Digitized by Google

men, we must see those needs unaided by the light of Christianity. If we would learn what amount of religion the world can derive from pure nature, we must take our stand beside nature at the time when she stood alone. Is there any possession which the pre-Christian world held to the same extent as the Christian world now holds it? There is one, and a very important one—external nature itself. If what we now call natural theology be derived from external nature, it ought to have the same form in the mind of a heathen as in the mind of a Christian, for its presumed outward source is one of the few things which have remained unchanged. The universe which the modern Englishman beholds, in so far as it is an object of perception, is the same universe which was beheld by the ancient Greek and Egyptian. But you will observe that the qualifying clause here introduced is one of vast importance, so vast that it practically negatives the whole statement. For it so happens that the visible universe is far more an object of thought than an object of perception. Nature is partly a fountain and partly a mirror, but it is more a mirror than a fountain. It is comparatively a small part of our impressions which we actually get from nature; the greater part of them are given to nature by the mind itself. We get from the visible universe chiefly what we have lent to that universe; we clothe it in the forms of our own thought, and paint it in the colours of our

Digitized by Google

own imagining. Nature is what we are; it weeps when we are sorrowful, it rejoices when we are glad. What is more to the purpose is the fact that it is orderly when we are orderly. The conception of law, whether it be scientific or moral law, is essentially a spiritual conception. Men who live in a state of spontaneity, invest nature with their own caprices; men who have not yet become a law to themselves, will look in vain in the material universe for any trace of a moral lawgiver. Every change in the mind is a change in our thought of nature; every change in our thought of nature is a new outlet into natural theology. The creation 'groaneth and travaileth' when the spirit of man is in bondage; the creation emerges 'into glorious liberty' when the spirit of man is emancipated. It is universally conceded that when Christianity came, there came such a change to the human mind. If so, the mental state which preceded that change, and not the so-called science of natural theology, must in these lectures be the object of comparison. We must endeavour to see what were the intellectual religious needs of the old pre-Christian world. We must try to transport ourselves back into the region of unaided nature, and must seek, if possible, to enter into intellectual sympathy with a state of things which has passed away. We must try to put ourselves in the place of men whose theology was in the strictest sense natural, and must endeavour, from a survey of

Digitized by Google

their religious opinions and speculations, to determine with some probability the religious wants which gave rise to them.

In pursuance of this plan, we make no pretence to any erudite research. We shall make use of no facts which are not thoroughly recognised and familiar to the average mind. Our aim, indeed, is not so much to state the facts, as to attempt a generalisation of those facts which are already admitted. We wish to arrive not so much at a knowledge of pre-Christian systems, as at a knowledge of the religious needs which prompted these systems. Our aim will be best served by considering the problems involved in the religious theories of antiquity, and this in turn will be best effected by viewing these theories not singly, but in pairs or in triplets. It is through the medium of comparison that modern knowledge chiefly grows. Men have ceased to study any object in itself; they seek to arrive at the knowledge of itself by tracing its relation to other objects. In every secular sphere there has sprung up a comparative science. We have a comparative anatomy, a comparative physiology, a comparative grammar; the modern idea of evolution itself is built upon a comparison of all the sciences. It is impossible for theology to stand still; if it would become a modern science, it must fall in with the stream. If we would give to the religious thought of man that value which we assign to his secular speculations, we must allow his

Digitized by Google

religious thought to have a sphere as wide as his secular speculations. We must not limit the idea of religion to any special time, or place, or creed; we must admit all times and places and creeds to be in their own way and in their own season the manifestations of that idea. We must refuse to consider the supernatural as incapable of comparison with the natural, we must seek in the natural itself for the elements of a universal religion. In the mutual antagonisms of ancient creeds we shall find a common need, which one common element is waiting to supply; and the need and the reconciling element will be most clearly recognised when we place the opposing systems in one view side by side.

In following out this course, we have been at some loss what to do with Judaism. On the one hand, it is not a completed revelation; on the other hand, it is accepted by Christianity as something more than the unaided light of nature. It is pre-Christian in time, yet it does not profess to be wholly pre-Christian in thought; it is ever pointing forward to that state of which it is the precursor. We cannot regard it as an integral part of the Christian revelation, whose light in some measure is made visible by its removal. But it would be equally unscientific, if we accept a supernatural element in Christianity, to treat as a pure product of nature the religion which Christianity itself declares to be its divinely commissioned forerunner. Under these circumstances, we

Digitized by Google

have determined in this inquiry to ignore Judaism altogether, wherever Judaism gives an independent testimony, and only to bring it into view when its testimony is in unison with the judgment of antiquity. We shall seek to consider it not in those aspects in which it differs from the opinions of heathendom, but only in those in which it happens to coincide with them; and we shall thus be under no necessity of interrupting our continuous search for the problems and the needs of unaided nature.

Now it seems to us that the religious thoughts of the pre-Christian world may all be summed up under three great problems, to which they were designed to find an answer,—What is God? What is His relation to humanity? Is His glory consistent with the existence of moral evil? These are, in our view, the great religious speculations of antiquity, and we shall have to consider each of them in turn. We shall have to see not only the evidence for the existence of such problems, but the mental need which each of them implied, and we shall then have to examine to what extent these mental needs have been supplied by the doctrines of Christianity. We shall find that the want underlying each problem is in point of fact met by a Christian doctrine,—the first by the belief in the Trinity; the second by the tenet of Incarnation; and the third by the faith in Atonement. When we have arrived at this adaptation, we shall be in a position to enter on the further

Digitized by Google

inquiry, to what extent the doctrines of revelation have modified the doctrines of natural theology. For let it be remembered that we no longer hold with the divines of last century the existence side by side of two separate religions, the one natural, and the other revealed. We hold that there is now a revealed religion, and that there was once a natural religion, but that the revealed has incorporated the natural, and deprived it of its separate aspect. 'When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part is done away.' We say the revealed has *incorporated* the natural, not destroyed it. To hold the light of revelation to be the extinction of the light of nature, is to deny the capacity of revelation to supply the needs of nature. We are not anxious in these lectures to make out a bad case for the natural instincts of the human mind, nor are we desirous, with Mr. Hardwick, to emphasize the points of contrast between the old world and the new. The superiority which we claim for Christianity is not only one which renders unnecessary, but one which even excludes, such a mode of treatment. Incorporation is a greater proof of superior height in a spiritual world than mere transcendence; and the highest triumph of the spiritually greater is that it includes the less. It is our design, therefore, to present the light of nature at its best. We shall ignore its lower or incipient manifestations. We shall not seek the illustration of its problems in the worship of the

Digitized by Google

fetich, or even in that early form of belief which, in the *Contemporary Review* for November 1878, Max Müller discusses under the name of 'Henotheism.' If we would adequately represent the needs of nature, we must try to see nature at its highest. Nor shall Christianity suffer by such a process; it will not only keep its new light, but, in addition, it will gather in the old, and in the act of ingathering the old shall become the new.

For it is worth inquiring, before closing this introduction, What is that relation which Christianity itself professes to hold to the systems of heathendom? There will recur to most people that remarkable passage in the first chapter of Romans, in which it seems to be decidedly hostile. But what is the ground of Paul's hostility? Is it that men living under the light of nature were following the natural religious instincts of their own minds? The cause of his anger is entirely the contrary. He complains that the Gentile worshippers had departed from those primitive instincts whereby the invisible things of God had in measure been revealed to them; that they had abandoned that instinctive morality whereby they who were without the law had been a law unto themselves. His charge against them is, that they 'did not like to retain God in their knowledge;' and by God he means the being whom the light of nature reveals. He tells them that they had changed the truth of that God into a lie, inasmuch as

Digitized by Google

they had changed His incorruptible glory 'into an image made like to corruptible man.' What is the lie which Paul here condemns? It is the belief that God shares in the vices of humanity. Men in the Roman empire came to think vice manly; and what a man thinks manly, he will soon come to think godly. They attributed to their gods the imperfections they found in themselves, they deified their own corruptions, they made an apotheosis of their own strifes and jealousies. It could not be contended that such a worship expressed one of the needs of nature; its leading characteristic was its unnaturalness, and it was on that ground that Paul repudiated it. He resisted it in the interest of nature, and in the interest of the light of nature; and nowhere is he really so friendly to the pre-Christian world, as in those very words where he seems to be most adverse. He desires to expunge from natural worship all that is unnatural, in order that the adaptation of nature to the supernatural may be clearly and unqualifiedly revealed.

It is in this adaptation that Paul finds the highest glory of historical Christianity. 'By Him all things consist,' are the words in which he expresses his sense of the glory of Christ's place in history. 'Consist' literally means 'stand together.' Paul says that in Christ the world stands together, that apart from Christ the world is reduced to fragments; He is the bond that unites the lives of men, and the

Digitized by Google

central truth that reconciles the systems of men. In this utterance Paul has touched at once the strength and the weakness of the heathen systems,—their capacity for union with Christ, and their fleeting and fragmentary character apart from Christ. For it cannot be denied that, looked at from the purely natural side, the religious creeds of the ancient world impress the mind with sadness. The sadness does not arise from a sense of their falseness, but from a perception of their fleetingness: they seem to exist only in order that they may vanish. We see each of the great religions of antiquity becoming in turn the predominant religion of the world, and all eventually subsiding into the form without the soul. We find the heathen world at the period of Christ's birth practically in a state of religious negation, having weighed all her creeds in the balance and found them all wanting. We are naturally disposed to ask if all these past ages have been lost? Have the speculations of the human mind been an utter failure? have the ages of human development been so many ages of waste? That question has been answered by Christianity. Christianity, Paul says, has begun its redemptive work by redeeming the systems of the past. Here the fragmentary and evanescent speculations of the natural mind stand together in unity; they are justified by Christ. The new light vindicates the old, and reveals new beauties in the old. The religious creeds of the ancient world lose their

Digitized by Google

aspect of isolation and mutual contradiction; they seem to be the facts of one great science of religion, to whose progress and development they have unconsciously been ministering. Christianity has opened a universal temple. It has made the voices of nature one voice. It has made the religions of nature one religion, of which itself is the completion and the crown. It has broken down that wall of demarcation which so long divided the systems of men, for in satisfying the needs of each it has reconciled the claims of all.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE II.

THE FIRST PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM.

WE come now to consider the first of those problems which we professed to find underlying the pre-Christian systems,—we mean the first in order of thought, for we assign to those problems no chronological order. Some systems contain all of them contemporaneously. We begin with that which is the fundamental question of all questionings, What is God? From the very dawn of religious history we find the natural instincts of the human mind in conflict with that problem. At the dawn of religious history, men are naturally apt to look without rather than within. The facts of life, and therefore the facts of religion, are not all before them: they see chiefly the material side, the spiritual is comparatively unrevealed. The question, What is God? is therefore first asked of external nature, and we must look for such an answer as external nature is competent to give.

It seems to us, however, that a modern religious thinker is very apt to form an erroneous anticipation

Digitized by Google

of what that answer ought to be. He expects to find the early percipient of nature inferring the existence of a being who dwells beyond it, in whose thought it was designed, and by whose hand it was fashioned. Paley says that a man looking for the first time upon a watch, would conclude that there must have been a watchmaker. Hume, on the other hand, would have denied such a conclusion. He would have said that the man, if he had never seen a self-acting product, would have formed no opinion on the subject, since we only infer that things are made from having seen like things made. Here are two modern views on a matter very pertinent to the present question. Let the object be, not the watch, but the universe, and the principle will be the same. Now it seems to us that a *primitive* man would have taken a view distinctively different from either of these. He would not infer that the watch must have had a maker, but he would conclude that it must be living. He would certainly recognise the necessity of a cause for the manifestation of force which he saw before him, but he would probably seek the cause not out of the object, but within it, would infer that the force which he beheld in the instrument was the life-force of its being. It was precisely so that the primitive mind looked at nature, whether in its general aspect or in its isolated details. In the incipient stages of natural life, the objects of nature were probably only seen in isolation, and each

Digitized by Google

on different occasions may have become in turn the object of worship. But what enabled the primitive mind to worship any natural object, was not the practical ignorance of the argument from causality; it was simply the belief that the watch was living. It was the conviction that the cause of the mechanism which it beheld lay in a life of its own, in a force inherent in its being, in a power which issued from within. As the knowledge of nature deepened, the sense of natural unity would deepen; the forms of the external world would cease to be isolated forms, and would seem to be only the manifestations of one common law. But even then it would never occur to the natural mind to look for the cause of this law in a life outside of itself; the watch would be greatly enlarged, but it would still be contemplated as living, and as the source of its own movements. Here, accordingly, is the first form of natural religion, the earliest answer with which we are acquainted to the problem, What is God? The answer is consistent with the natural instincts of the human mind. The first object it beholds is nature, and from nature its first impressions are derived; the first aspect of nature is one of voluntary life, and its own voluntary life is viewed as the cause of its being.

The earliest form of rational religion, then, is nature-worship. It would be wrong to characterize it as either a sensuous or a spiritual worship. It proceeds from the predominance of the external, and

Digitized by Google

in so far it is materialistic; yet the external itself is not contemplated as a pure materialism, but as the expression of an inward life. Nature is in fact the ancient substitute for Fatherhood; it is by definition that which begets, brings forth, produces. It was to the old world the embryo of what divine Fatherhood is to the new. Men reverenced it as the great parent of their common humanity. They did not comprehend it, but they felt that at one time it comprehended them. It did not evoke their love, as it was not supposed to manifest love; but it elicited their respect, their fear, their wonder, their worship. They saw in it the mysterious source of their origin, which, even when they had seen it, remained mysterious still, and they bowed down before a presence which was at once so intimately near and so widely unintelligible to their own.

Now there have been two great waves of nature-worship, marking respectively its flow and its ebb: the first is represented by India,[1] the second is revealed in Greece. The difference between them has been eloquently expressed by Max Müller. He points out how the Indian mind, in its contact with nature, is habitually sad; how the Greek mind, in the same contact, is habitually joyous. The Indian seems to be crushed beneath the admiration of that which he worships; the Greek seems, by reason of his admiration, to rise into equality with the object of his

[1] Appendix, Note 5.

Digitized by Google

worship. The difference is in miniature very much the same distinction which Mr. Buckle draws between Europe and Asia in general, when he tells us that in the former man has power over nature, that in the latter nature has power over man. But the question is, how are we to account for this difference? Shall we explain it by the contrary aspects of nature herself? Such an explanation has been sometimes attempted. We are told that in India the manifestation of nature is on so vast a scale, that the individual mind is overwhelmed by the spectacle. The eye is appalled by the vision of gigantic mountains, and boundless plains, and trackless forests. Beneath the burning rays of tropic suns, and beside the course of rivers which seem to wander without end, the individual man feels himself a fragment of creation, and is compelled to merge his being in the life of the mighty whole. In Greece, on the other hand, man is confronted by the other side of nature. He meets it not in its majesty, but in its gentleness; not in its gigantic grandeur, but in its persuasive softness. He sees it in an aspect level to his own capacity, and the sense of equality deprives him of the sense of fear. His worship ceases to be an awe-struck devotion, it becomes a pleasant amusement. His religion loses its mystic aspect, it becomes the poetry of his life. He sports amid the visible forms of the material universe, because the forms of that universe are adapted to his own finite being; he

Digitized by Google

plays with physical nature, because physical nature has ceased to overshadow him. The visible world has assumed to the Greek a garb that hides its superior power, and the Greek, beguiled by the disguise, forgets the distance that divides him from the mystery of nature.

Now we must admit the geographical facts on which this theory is based. There is unquestionably the difference here indicated between the aspect of the Indian universe and the aspect of the Greek universe. The real question is, Is the theory the legitimate conclusion from the facts? Do we find, as a matter of experience, that the perception of vastness and majestic grandeur has a tendency to dwarf the individual mind? The answer of experience must be, it depends on the character of the individual mind which beholds the spectacle. If the mind be in an incipient or infantile stage, the vastness of nature will overwhelm it; if the mind be in a state of enlargement and civilisation, the vastness of its material surroundings will add to the largeness of its ideas. Nowhere is physical nature represented on a vaster scale than on the American continent, yet this exhibition has produced on the American continent precisely the opposite effect which it produced on the Indian mind: it has served to enlarge the sense of individuality, and has stimulated the intellect to a life of bold and ambitious enterprise. The literature of America has largely taken its tone

Digitized by Google

from its geographical circumstances, and that tone has been the reverse of Indian: it has expressed, not the sense of depression, but the joy of national confidence. Occasionally, indeed, we meet with an exception which only serves to prove the rule. Perhaps the most notable instance which American literature affords of a vast territorial extent creating individual sadness, is that of Longfellow's 'Evangeline.' In this poem we are called to contemplate the affection of the individual heart baffled by the vastness of the Transatlantic continent, wandering over plain and mountain in the vain search for its object, and prevented from reaching that object by the very absence of boundaries. Such a conception serves chiefly to illustrate how the geographical features of America might have impressed the national mind, if that mind had itself been less enlarged and developed; and the fact that it does not constitute the prevailing tone of its literature, must strongly weaken our belief in the necessarily depressing influence of the majesty of nature.

The truth is, we do not need to go so far to find the explanation of the difference between India and Greece; we shall go too far in search of it if we overlook the development of the mind itself. The incipient mind is nearer to the physical than to the spiritual, and therefore, in its stage of incipiency, it is weaker than nature. So long as the human soul views itself as a mere physical force, it views itself

Digitized by Google

as a mere fragment of nature; and the part must inevitably be lost in the whole. But if the mind should awaken to the conviction that there is within it a force different from and inexplicable by the physical, its attitude to external nature will immediately be changed. It will no longer be a part of the outward creation, which can only conceive the infinitude of that creation by conceiving itself as lost in it. It will stand upon an outside platform, and look upon the visible universe with an independent eye. It will cease in its own view to be the servant of nature; it will aspire first to be its companion, and ultimately to be its superior.

Such is the mental difference which is expressed in the Indian and the Grecian world. The mind of India exhibited the stage of the natural man; and because a natural man is a weaker force than a natural universe, it sank into nothingness beneath the contemplation of nature. The mind of Greece had reached that stage which Hegel calls the adolescence of humanity. It had arrived at the period of self-consciousness, when the desire of personal independence becomes the ruling impulse of the life; and, through the very strength of that desire, it had found that there dwelt within it a force which could not be reduced into any of the powers of nature,—a force which, if not higher than the natural, was at least essentially different from it, and rendered by its difference incapable of absorption in it. Hence that

Digitized by Google

universe, which to the Indian was a source of fear, became to the Greek a source of joy. He seemed already in anticipation to feel himself its superior. He had a prophetic conviction of his own possibilities, and the prophecy made him bold; the mystery of nature faded before the mystery of mind, and the reverence for nature was eclipsed by the reverence for the human spirit.

Thus far, then, the problem of heathendom was unsolved. There was a need in the human soul which visible nature had failed to satisfy. It had satisfied the first craving of humanity—the desire of the mind to explain its own origin; it had filled up that craving with a conception which stood to the old world in the place of divine Fatherhood. But, as the spirit of man became self-conscious, there arose within it a desire to know something more than its origin; it wanted an explanation not merely of its beginning, but of its continuance. It asked the meaning of those mighty powers which it felt within it; it was no longer content to inquire whence they came, it wanted to know what they were. The greatness of the human soul was itself a present mystery; the continued existence of that soul demanded a divine influence as strongly as did its origination. Man was now driven to the second stage of the problem. The soul of the Greek had found a new ideal in the beauty of its own nature; and what a man's ideal is, his religion soon must be. The moment visible

Digitized by Google

nature ceased to be the most beautiful of objects, the life of nature ceased to be the type of God; the moment the human mind was contemplated as the grandest thing in the universe, the power of mind became the type of God. It was Greece which made the transition from the natural to the spiritual thought of the divine. It was here that first nature had revealed her inadequacy to meet the religious wants of the spirit of man; it was here that first the spirit of man revealed its power to furnish a contribution to the human thought of God.

The transition at which we have now arrived is the passage from nature-worship into Platonism,—from the deifying of the life of nature, to the deifying of the power of mind. In this new form of religion God is contemplated no longer as the source of natural life, but as the essence of supersensuous thought. There is still recognised, indeed, a great life of nature, or soul of the natural universe, by which rude matter is fashioned into form, and through which the transient form is vivified and kept alive. But this life of nature is no longer identical with God; it is an inferior intelligence which God has made vicegerent of the material universe, and which He has placed over that universe with the express purpose of keeping it out of His reach. For be it remembered that to the mind of the Platonist matter has not only ceased to be divine, it has become the antithesis of the divine, the obstacle to its influence,

Digitized by Google

the hindrance to its working. When Greece underwent a reaction against nature-worship, it underwent a reaction against nature itself. It would have been quite competent for the Platonist to hold the insufficiency of nature to represent God, and yet to retain nature as a symbol of the invisible thought of God. This the Platonist did not do. When he abandoned the worship of material forces, he abandoned all fellowship with these forces. He broke away from the forms of the surrounding universe, and strove to fix his gaze upon a universe which was unseen and eternal. God was thought. He was not the water, as Thales said; or the air, as Anaximenes said; or the fire, as Heraclitus said: He was the soul within all souls, the thought behind all thoughts, the mind at the basis of all minds. To come near to God, therefore, was to fly within oneself. It was to withdraw the eye from the vision of vanishing scenes, to curtain the ear from the impression of perishable sounds, to cleanse the mind from the conception of earthly images, to steel the heart to the influence of mundane affections. It was to transplant the soul into a world of abstract contemplation, where the reign of sense would end and the reign of spirit would begin, where reason would be undisturbed by the motives of the outer man, and where the will would be unswayed by the temptations of the earthly life.

It need not be said that such a system provided a

Digitized by Google

thorough cure for nature-worship; unfortunately the cure became itself a disease. When the Platonist abandoned the worship of nature he abandoned the love of nature, and when he abandoned the love of nature he practically gave up all love. If it be sinful to give the heart to that which has a material form, it is sinful to give the heart to any human soul; for every human soul is bounded on one side by the world of nature. The Platonist did not shrink from the conclusion. He boldly affirmed that all human affections belonged to the outer or sensuous man, and that whatever encouraged these affections should be hunted down and crucified. He proposed a new object for human love, corresponding to the new world which he had opened for humanity. He declared that the object of man's admiration should be, not the individual, but the qualities of the individual; not virtuous men, but virtues themselves. Man should love that which is universal; and individuals were not universal, they were the fleeting, vanishing forms of a sensuous world. Yet there was in them a universal element which might be made strong enough to conquer the sensuous form,—a power of divine contemplation which was itself the shadow of God. This universal element was the true object of human love. All that belonged to the individual as an individual was sensuous, and therefore perishable; that alone which the individual shared in common with humanity was eternal, and worthy to

Digitized by Google

be loved. Beautiful things were fading, and therefore were not for the heart of man; but the idea of beauty which they symbolized was imperishable and incorruptible. The idea and not the thing must be the treasure of the soul, — the virtue and not the virtuous, the beauty and not the beautiful, the purity and not the pure.

Such was that strange form of sentiment which has come down to us by the name of Platonic love. The meaning of the phrase, indeed, is popularly misunderstood by those who use it. The popular view of Platonic love is the substitution of friendship for romantic affection; in Plato's view, it was the substitution of love of the thought for love of the thinker. It is of course from Plato's standpoint that the subject must be viewed. Viewed from that standpoint, the idea which most powerfully impresses us is the utter lovelessness of the religious system which had supplanted nature-worship. The supplanting of nature-worship was in itself an advantage, but the object which had been placed in its room did not fill the blank in the human soul. In driving that soul from the world without, Platonism simply drove it within upon itself, proposed to substitute the contemplation of self for the contemplation of nature. In doing so, it in one sense gave more, in another sense less, to the worshipper. It gave more, inasmuch as the soul is in itself a grander object than nature; it gave less, because, in forbidding man to

Digitized by Google

look without, it imprisoned him in a selfish solitude. In prohibiting the heart to extend its perceptions beyond the range of its own meditations, Platonism practically destroyed the heart's possibility of joy. It compelled it to dwell alone, to feed upon itself, to prey upon its own vacancy. It trampled upon one of the deepest instincts of religious worship, and in trampling upon it it awakened it from its lethargy. That instinct was the need of divine companionship or religious communion. The element of divine companionship or communion is necessary to any perfect system of religion, yet this was the element which of all others had hitherto received the least prominence. Even nature-worship had failed to yield anything more than a partial fellowship to the human soul. We have seen that, in relation to the spirit of man, nature had assumed two contrary attitudes: in Asia it had been man's superior, in Europe it had begun to be his inferior. Either of these attitudes was prejudicial to divine communion. Companionship demands as its preliminary requisite, that there shall exist between its objects an equality of nature. There may be any amount of inequality in degree; the child may hold communion with the man, in spite of the difference of their development, but that is because the child and the man stand on the same plane of being, they have the level of a common humanity. Different intelligences cannot commune from the standpoint of their difference. It matters

Digitized by Google

not whether the difference lie in superiority or inferiority, if it amount to an essential separation it excludes communion; the angel in the heavens and the beast in the field are alike and for the same reason debarred from the communion of the human soul. Nature in the thought of her worshippers passed from one extreme to another, but in each extreme she failed to reach man's ideal of fellowship. To the Indian she was too great; to the Greek she was too insignificant; from both she was divided by the want of a common platform of being. In neither phase did man find in her a possible source of companionship: in her earlier aspect, fear precluded love; in her later, the sense of human superiority precluded that respect and reverence without which love cannot be. Platonism, in casting nature aside, had simply by a finishing stroke completed and endorsed a long course of mental development, in which man had found himself too great to find solace in the companionship of nature, but Platonism had in so doing made the solitude complete. It had for the first time isolated the idea of religion even from the semblance of outward communion, had driven the spirit of man within its own depths, and had left it to solve the problem alone. It was clear that in such a solitude the problem could not be solved. One vital element was wanting for its solution. When the mind of man inquired, What is God? it was not in search of a mere abstraction; it was

Digitized by Google

seeking a manifestation. It was striving to find, not simply a logical definition of God, but a visible representation of God,—something which it could see and hear and touch without degrading its object and degrading itself, something which would supply an outward image whose worship would be yet no idolatry. It was in search of that very element which Platonism has striven to exclude from the divine,—materialism; and it was in search of it just in order that it might find the one thing which could make its religious worship a joy,—the sense of divine companionship, the voice of communion with God.

It was this need in the heart of humanity which led to the rise of that singular phase of mythology, wherein the great men of earth were given a place amongst the gods. It does not seem to us that such a phase of religious thought could have emanated from a very early stage of religious experience.[1] It exhibits a dawning conviction that, in addition to the life of nature and the power of mind, there was a third source in which it might be expedient to seek for God,—the glory of humanity. But a perception of the glory of humanity must of necessity be a comparatively late stage in the process of man's development. We have seen that the human spirit is originally depressed by its contact with nature, and incapacitated by its fears from gathering within itself the rich stores which nature has spread around it.

[1] Appendix, Note 6.

Digitized by Google

We have seen that the process of transition from fear to confidence was not a rapid one, that it required the transmutation from an Asiatic into a European culture. Yet, until the soul had conquered its overmastering fear of nature, it is difficult to see how it could realise the glory of humanity. In point of fact, it is chiefly in the Western mythology that the new phase of religious life is to be found; it is when man has conquered nature that he begins to deify himself. He does so in some measure for self-defence. In losing nature-worship he has lost the worship of an outward power, and he dreads to find himself alone. To fill the blank, he weaves out of himself a new religious world. He selects the best specimens of humanity with which he is acquainted, and raises them in his thoughts up to the level of the gods. He becomes heir for the first time to something which, in imagination at least, is a real communion with the divine, for he finds himself confronted by forms which even their divinity deprives not of a human likeness, and his worship grows tinged with that sympathy which may be the harbinger, and is always the preliminary requisite of love.

It is true that when the ancient world selected the best specimens of its humanity to lift into the dignity of the gods, it was not in a condition to select wisely. It chose those mortals whom it believed to be the best, and its choice fell for the most part upon the physically strongest; its Pantheon was filled rather

Digitized by Google

with the brave than with the good. Yet we must not do injustice to these first efforts at the glorification of humanity. Let us remember wherein lay the special need of that ancient world. The only semblance it had ever known of an outward divine communion had been the worship of external nature, and the death of that worship had left a blank. Is it surprising that, in its attempts to fill up the blank, the old world should have sought in humanity for those attributes and those elements which reminded it most powerfully of the worship it had lost? Is it surprising that, in its efforts to construct a new thought of God, it should have availed itself of those materials which it had seen as components of the old? Nature had been known to it chiefly in its properties of physical strength. There were men who seemed to manifest the same properties, who appeared to be gifted with these very elements of physical force which had commanded in the past the reverence of humanity. In these men the majesty of nature seemed to live again, and the divinity of nature to rise anew. Humanity itself took that place which the external universe had occupied. Man worshipped the physical, but the physical illuminated by intelligence and made accessible by human intelligence. He saw strength exhibited in his own likeness, and in that connection strength became to him an object of human sympathy; he found a worship of communion in the glory of his brother man.

Digitized by Google

Let us now gather up those religious needs which we have found in the history of the ancient world, remembering at the same time that this ancient world represents the natural and unaided instincts of humanity. We have seen that these religious needs were three in number. There was, first, a sense of dependence to be explained; there was, secondly, a sense of greatness to be accounted for; and there was, thirdly, a sense of solitude to be appeased. We have seen that the three phases of ancient worship were in reality the attempts to answer respectively each of these requirements. Man in India felt himself to be dependent; the Indian religion supplied him with an origin, by referring his being to the great life of nature,—the begetting or fatherly principle. Man in Platonism felt himself to be great; Platonism furnished him with a reason for his greatness, by revealing a universal soul within his individual soul. Man in the Western mythology felt himself to be alone; mythology broke his solitude, by lifting up to the level of divinity these sharers of his own nature, who were believed to be the noblest; he found companionship in the glorification of humanity. Here, then, following the process of human need, we arrive at a threefold thought of God reached by the natural theologian, that is, by the religious world which lived before the Cross. We find the thought of a fatherly or begetting principle from which humanity emanated, the thought of a divine Spirit in which humanity

Digitized by Google

lives and moves and has its being, and the thought of a human form which humanity can give to the divine, and through which it can commune with the divine. The originating principle or Fatherhood, the divine Spirit in man, and the human form in God, constitute collectively the answer of the ancient world to the first problem of heathendom.

Is this answer complete or satisfactory? Does it supply those needs of the natural mind which called it into being? if not, wherein consists its shortcoming? Such is the question we have now to consider, and it does not appear one of great difficulty. We have said that by tracing the needs of human nature we arrive at a threefold thought of God, but it is *we* who arrive at it. It is easy, from a retrospect of Christian experience, to look back upon the phases of the old world and find in them a harmony. Let us remember that it is Christian experience which has given them their harmony. As long as these phases are seen in the light of the old world itself, they are seen in a state of conflict; they are not three in one, but three in discord. They do not constitute one united thought of God, they do not form the elements of a single religion. That which becomes in Christianity a threefold thought of the divine nature, exists in heathendom as three opposite views of the divine nature. As long as we remain within the circle of heathen religions, these views indeed are mutually exclusive, and of this a moment's

Digitized by Google

reflection will suffice to convince us. The Indian beheld in the life of universal nature a begetting principle, which to that extent corresponded to the idea of Fatherhood, but it was a Fatherhood which expressly excluded the idea of Sonship. Nature was so infinite that it swallowed up the finite. It left no room for the energies of the individual; even the so-called incarnations of the nature-God of India never lifted from its depression the finite being of man. The Platonist beheld in the intellectual capacities of the human soul the evidence of a divine Spirit in which it lived and moved, but the divine Spirit of Platonism was alike a revolt from the creative principle of India, and from the finite longings of the popular mind. It was at variance both with the Fatherhood and the Sonship, for it maintained the eternity of matter, and it denied the right of individual experience. The mythologies of the West were a protest of the popular mind against a God whose only attribute was infinitude. They expressed the determination of the soul to find an object of living, personal communion, clothed in its own humanity, and represented in its own form. But the very reaction towards finitude carried the mythologies of the West too far. It led them to deify in humanity that which was furthest removed from spirituality and nearest to the physical life. They worshipped the strong, the brave, the physically powerful; they measured a mortal's claim to divinity

Digitized by Google

by the prowess of his feats in arms. In so doing they forgot at once the fatherly principle of the Indian and the spiritual principle of the Platonist. Thus the religious instincts of the old world had gathered together elements which they could not unite,—elements which, if blended into unity, would have indeed constituted a majestic and all-embracing thought of God, but which in their isolated and separate worship left the idea of the divine as far as ever from the grasp of a united humanity. It was reserved for another and a higher power than the old world possessed, to find the bridge over that gulf which divided the pre-Christian conceptions of God, and to combine the three forms of heathen religion into a form which, while including infinitely more, was large enough to comprehend these lowliest speculations.

That power was Christianity, and that form in which it united the speculations of antiquity was the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity encountered directly the first problem of heathendom, and in encountering the problem it embraced all sides of the question. It took account of those needs of humanity which had produced the three phases of early religious thought, and it strove to give expression to each while recognising the claims of all. It took up the three answers which the old world had given to the question, What is God ?—the answer of the Indian, the answer of the Platonist, the answer

Digitized by Google

of the worshippers of human deities,—and it sought to combine these answers into one great responsive utterance which made the three conceptions a three-fold thought of one God; it declared Him to be at one and the same moment the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He was the begetting principle which the Indian had sought, the human form which the popular mythology had sought, the divine life in humanity which the mind of the Platonist had sought; but inasmuch as He was all united, He was in each case more than any of these conceptions involved. He was not merely the begetting principle of India, for He was the Spirit at the same time that He was the Father; Fatherhood, by its union with Spirit, had ceased to be a mere life of nature, and had become a living intelligence. He was not simply the human form of the popular mythology, for the form, too, had been associated with an infinite Spirit, which placed the glory of human nature in something higher than its physical strength. Nor yet was He merely the divine Spirit whom the Platonist adored as the source of human intelligence, for He was the Spirit united to the form. The divine life of the Platonist had been rendered cold by its divorce from natural life and humanity, had lost its beauty by being dissociated from man. Christianity restored their union, and restored it in a form which hitherto it had never known. The Spirit of God was no longer that mere life of nature which the Indian had

Digitized by Google

worshipped, yet He was a life which in embracing humanity comprehended nature too. He revealed in the human soul possibilities of infinite greatness, yet He revealed these possibilities not in a region of abstract speculation, but in the common walks and aims of everyday life, in the meanest duties of the passing hour, in the labours of the hand and the affections of the heart, in the struggles and the cares of a finite existence; the Spirit was united to the Son, and therefore religion was made harmonious with the pursuits of individual life. Such was the Christian Trinity,—the reconciliation of those elements which the heathen world had divided. Their union enhanced the greatness of each, by giving to each some attribute of the other. The ideas of Fatherhood, of Sonship, of Spirituality, rose into new grandeur, when they emerged out of their mutual antagonism, and God answered in one thought the needs of a united humanity, in 'the Father of an infinite majesty; His honourable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.'

It may seem that in the treatment of this question we have gone somewhat out of our way to find a solution lying at the door. It may be asked why, in considering the adaptations of nature to the doctrine of the Trinity, we have not simply availed ourselves of those direct parallels to the Trinity which are presented by heathen systems? It must indeed be confessed that those seeming parallels are

Digitized by Google

numerous enough. There is scarcely a religion of antiquity which does not contain something that reads like an anticipation of the triune God. Even the rigid unity of China was unable to escape the tendency to triplicity. It found that material nature could not at all times be contemplated as one. It recognised in the material framework an element of power and an element of receptivity, and to meet the different characters of these it separated the one life of nature into two lives. India was constrained to see a threefold process in nature, and to indicate it by the respective names of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Parsism, which ultimately became a dualism, was at first in all probability the worship of a triple power, which eventually divided itself into two opposing powers. Platonism, notwithstanding its abstract and introspective tendency, was unable to contemplate the divine thought as an absolute unity, but was compelled to give different names to what seemed to be its different phases. Thus on every side we find the tendency of the pre-Christian world towards the three rather than the one. Why do we not take this tendency as itself the indication that nature is adapted for the Christian doctrine? why do we not accept the ancient parallels as proofs of the essential harmony between the light of reason and the light of revelation?

The reason is, that we hold the adaptations of nature to be the needs of nature. We believe the

Digitized by Google

harmony between the natural and the revealed is best seen in the defects of the natural, and in the supply of these defects by the revealed. We have therefore tried to trace the needs of humanity, and to ground upon these needs the doctrine of the Trinity. It will be found, however, that the seeming historical parallels to that doctrine have not grown out of the needs of nature, but have, on the contrary, proceeded from its supplies. These so-called trinities were framed from actual observation of the phenomena of nature and of mind. They were simply a catalogue or generalisation of natural and mental experiences. When the Indian observed the birth, growth, and decay of animal and vegetable forms, or when he looked at the course of one of his own vast rivers in its beginning, in its widening, and at last in its mingling with the sea, he came to associate the entire life of nature with this process of advent, expansion, and disappearance; and he expressed this process by the terms Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. When the Platonist turned his eye inward on the constitution of his own mind, and when he observed that in this mental constitution there was a region of sense, a region of understanding, and a region of will, he felt that any system of religion which identified God with thought must inevitably take account of these different spiritual experiences. He therefore assigned to the deity a threefold sphere of existence, according as he manifested himself as the source of

Digitized by Google

abstract being, as the soul of the intellectual universe, or as the life of the natural universe. In one sense the Platonist is nearer than the Indian to the conception of a triune God, inasmuch as he starts not from the world of matter, but from the world of mind. Yet even in this mental atmosphere the Platonist has not succeeded in realizing his three divine manifestations in one harmonious thought; on the contrary, each manifestation of Plato's God is for the time exclusive of every other. There can be no meeting here of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. As the source of abstract being, God is not the soul of the intellectual universe, for a soul is not an abstraction, but a concrete spiritual existence. As the soul of the intellectual universe, the God of Plato is not the life of the natural world, for the natural world in the system of Plato is ever the antagonist of the world of intellect. It is not, therefore, in individual historic parallels, however similar in appearance, that we must seek the adaptation of the light of nature to the revealed doctrine of the Christian Trinity. The more we examine these, the more shall we be convinced that they stand upon another plane, depend on other principles, and owe their existence to other motives. If we would discover the true point of union between the light of nature and this doctrine of revelation, we must seek in nature for the need of such a doctrine; and if we should find in the natural struggles of the religious

Digitized by Google

intellect the demand for a view of God which shall embrace the diverse in the one, we shall have reached a more satisfactory evidence of adaptation than could be supplied by a thousand instances of mere verbal parallelism.

We have recognised three distinct needs in the religious consciousness of the early world,—a sense of dependence, a sense of solitude, and a sense of greatness,—and we have found these needs to have been satisfied in the doctrine of the Christian Trinity. We have been confirmed in this view, by observing that in the history of early Christianity there was a tendency to give peculiar prominence to one of the divine persons. It seems to us that in this period of Church history the prominence was given to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, according as the age was dominated by one or other of the needs here specified. At the beginning of the Christian era, men felt the same sense of dependence which they had felt in their first contact with nature. They were in the presence of something new. They were surrounded by manifestations hitherto unseen, and as yet unintelligible. They beheld the rising of another sun before which the sun of the old world was fading away. They felt themselves to be in a region of prodigies, and in the presence of the marvellous their individual life again realized its nothingness. They naturally directed their eyes to the cause of these new phenomena,—the begetting principle, the

Digitized by Google

creative Father. By and by there came a change. The novelty passed away, and the sense of wonder faded. Men became accustomed to the Christian atmosphere, and breathed it as their native air. The prodigies ceased, the marvels melted into laws, and the supernatural entered into union with the natural. Man, deserted by the outward miracle, felt his religious solitude, and recognised his need of a human companionship; the contemplation of the Father began to wane, and the contemplation of the Son began. At last the organization of the Church was completed, and the Christian religion assumed the form of a great secular power. Man, in the very exercise of his worship, experienced a sense of empire, and found it necessary to account for his consciousness of greatness. Then began pre-eminently the age of the Spirit, or rather that age which men assigned to the Spirit; the Papacy became the organ of a theocratic power, and the empire of the hierarchy was referred to the inspiration of the breath of Pentecost. Thus each age, in the effort to emphasize and to answer its own special need, gave prominence to that aspect of the Godhead which seemed best to meet its requirement. Yet it is not necessary nor is it desirable that the Christian consciousness should thus be divided. A fully-developed Christianity will find the best satisfaction for all its needs, not in separating the divine manifestations, but in reaching that common element which is manifested in all.

Digitized by Google

The Father by a kindred Spirit recognising Himself in the Son, and the Son by a kindred Spirit recognising Himself in the Father, are aspects which, taken together, constitute the harmony of love. In the definition of the divine nature as love, we reach the common element which pervades the triune life of God, and in reaching it we attain in a single thought the united answer to the three needs of heathendom. The sense of dependence is answered here: the individual is pointed to the source of his sustenance, while yet in the process his individuality is not depressed but ennobled. The sense of solitude is answered here: man finds in his religion a source of human companionship, for the very idea of love necessitates that equality of nature without which there can be no communion. Finally, the sense of greatness is answered here: man reaches an explanation of those elements of grandeur which his nature still retains, when he recognises that even in the ruin and decay of his moral being he exists as an object of solicitude to the heart of infinite love.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE III.

THE SECOND PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM.

THE second problem of the pre-Christian world was, What is God's relation to humanity? If the first question was, What is God? the second practically was, What is providence? What is God's interest in the affairs of men? Now it will be found that from the standpoint of nature there are three conceivable ways in which the subject of God's relation to humanity may be regarded: He may be looked upon as the power beyond man, as the King over man, or as the essence pervading man. The pre-Christian world affords examples of each of these; and we propose following the order not of chronology, but of thought, to select representative specimens. The three views of divine providence here indicated may perhaps be best described by the words Deistic, Theistic, and Pantheistic.[1] Deism in its extreme form contemplates the Supreme Being simply in His supremacy; it looks upon Him only as the power beyond the world, and refuses to allow Him any

[1] Appendix, Note 7.

Digitized by Google

interest in the world's government and history; it solves the problem by denying that there is any relation between the mundane and the supramundane. Theism in its natural form also starts from the conception of divine supremacy, but it contemplates the divine supremacy as something which is exerted *over* the world; God is not merely a supramundane power, but the sovereign of a kingdom of which human beings are the subjects, and therefore by the very fact of His supremacy interested in the government of this world. Pantheism contemplates God not as the power beyond the soul, nor as the power over the soul, but as the power OF the soul,—the great comprehensive life in which the life of humanity lives and moves and has its being. The ancient world, in its seeking after God, adopted one or other of these views; a few prominent examples will suffice to illustrate this.

We begin with that ancient theory of providence which regarded God simply as the power beyond humanity,—in other words, which denied that there was a providence. Its most prominent representative was Epicurus. With his actual system of cosmogony we have here no concern; he held, as is well known, that the world was produced by a concourse of material atoms which themselves existed from eternity. But what we have here to observe is the fact that, in giving utterance to such a theory, Epicurus was not actuated by any opposition to the

Digitized by Google

supernatural; nay, paradoxical as it may seem, it might from a certain point of view even be said that he was led to construct his theory by an ill-directed reverence for the supernatural. Neither he nor his great spiritual descendant Lucretius ever attempted to deny the existence of superior beings; what they said was that these beings *were* superior, and therefore incapable of mingling in earthly affairs. The deism of their creed consisted in this, that they attached a rigid sense to the thought of the supernatural. They regarded the supernatural as that which was absolutely beyond the reach of the natural, so that the divine could no more stretch down to the human than the human could stretch up to the divine. There was an impassable barrier of distance between gods and men, and it was precisely this barrier of distance which made the one men and the other gods. If we inquire still further in what the distance consisted, we shall find a remarkable illustration of the fact that a man forms his idea of God after his own image. The Epicurean philosophy had especially directed its efforts to find a preventative of the cares of life; to the Epicurean, as to the Stoic, care was the great bugbear of existence, and the life without care was the ideal life. To him, therefore, the gods were those beings who were distinguished from all others by their absence of care. It was impossible they could be so distinguished if they were permitted to touch the contagion of the

Digitized by Google

human atmosphere. It was necessary they should dwell alone, in a region too far remote to be reached by the sighs and groans and tears of humanity. Their divinity could only be preserved by the preservation of their equanimity, and their equanimity must be broken by the participation in human struggles. It was to keep them from such a fate that Epicurus enclosed them in a paradise to which the knowledge of earth was forbidden, and which the earth on its part was forbidden to know. Epicureanism is the most thoroughgoing expression of paganism which the pagan world itself reveals. Nowhere is the force of nature so terribly natural; nowhere is the antithesis so grimly marked between the old world and the new. Here the popular instincts of the pagan mind speak out unreservedly. The social life of paganism was engrossed in the worship of power, or rather in the worship of that species of power which resides in the physically strong and in the outwardly untrammelled. That strength which could shake off the burdens of others was the object which man most admired in man: was it not inevitable that it should also be the object which man most desired in God? His divinity became the apotheosis of that ideal of glory which he had marked out for himself. Of all the aspects of paganism, this of Epicurus is to the believer in Christianity the most difficult to comprehend, because it idealizes a kind of power which to

Digitized by Google

the believer in Christianity no longer represents the greatest force in the universe. Men who have breathed the atmosphere of the writer to the Hebrews, have felt with him that the inability to be touched with the feeling of human infirmities is an absence rather than an indication of power; that to be able to be touched with these infirmities implies a strength that is divine. Yet we must not thrust our ideal on the mind of the ancient world; we must view its religious aspirations from the level of its own capacities. In its social aspect paganism did not pretend to be unselfish: its aim was the strength, the beauty, the culture of the individual mind; each man lived to himself, and each man died to himself. Nor did Epicurus believe that in assigning the same qualities to the gods he was instituting a religion; on the contrary, it was just because he felt compelled to assign them these qualities that he held religion to be impossible. Whatever may be said against his creed, it must always be said in its favour that it was thoroughly honest, and perfectly consistent with its premisses. If the pagan world had possessed no life but its life of pleasure, Epicurus would have supplied all its needs. But then beneath its paganism this world had a life of humanity, which reminded it not only that it was mortal, but that it was suffering. Epicureanism became weak when measured by its own standard. The individual did not lose his cares by making his

Digitized by Google

own individuality the sole object of his contemplation; he simply chose one set of cares in exchange for another. It is impossible for human life to avoid sacrifice; the selfish man lives in some aspects a more sacrificial life than the unselfish, and there is no species of care more hard to endure than that which is engendered by self-contemplation. The Epicurean, wherever he may be, will at all times find this to his cost. The life of humanity is inseparable from the cares of humanity. If anything can lift humanity out of its cares, it must be contact with some higher life. Is there such a contact? That is the great problem of the divine providence. The Epicurean answered in the negative, and by so answering he destroyed the hope of his own Epicurean philosophy, whose desire and aim was the search for human happiness. The needs of human nature have in all ages proved too strong to suffer any widespread prevalence of so sweeping a religious negation.

We come, therefore, to the second of those providential theories in which the pre-Christian world figured to itself the relation of the divine to the human; it may be called the theocratic or kingly theory. Like the Epicurean view, it starts from the attribute of divine power, but it contemplates that power as exerted over humanity. God's relation to the world is viewed as one of sovereignty: He is the King, and we are the subjects. It is singular how this notion of the sacredness of kinghood has per-

Digitized by Google

vaded religious systems in other respects the reverse of theistic. The religion of Confucius, though it was the worship of an impersonal, if not a material principle, was essentially a state religion, in which the Chinese emperor was conceived to be a special organ of the divine power. The religion of pagan Rome was in its highest development the worship of imperialism: the emperor was to the pagan Roman an exaggerated form of what the pope was to the most Catholic of mediævalists. The religion of Plato was perhaps nearer to Pantheism than to Theism, yet it laid strong hold of the thought of divine kinghood; its republic was really an empire in which the stronger minds were to dominate the weaker, and God was the universal mind which in comprehending dominated all. Higher still in the rank of theistic religions stands the creed of the early Parsees, ere yet that creed had been saddened by too keen a perception of the conflict of human life. Parsism, in the doctrine of Zoroaster, is a worship hardly distinguishable from the purest Theism,—the reverence of a God of moral beauty, the symbol of whose perfection is the light of heaven; He is the sovereign of a kingdom of light, the supreme ruler of a government of order. But nowhere does the theocratic idea obtain so powerful a mastery as in the worship of Judaism. We have not assumed in these lectures that Judaism forms a phase of the natural faith of humanity, but we have promised to adduce its testimony when it is in

Digitized by Google

harmony with the natural faith of humanity. The theistic creed of Judaism emphasizes with tremendous force the craving of human nature for a God in relation to itself. Starting as it does from the perception of man's natural anarchy, it carries to the utmost verge the desire for a king over the world. The title which it reverences above all others is the title of king; heaven itself is represented to its view under the aspect of a kingdom. It feels that what the soul wants above everything else is order, government, law. It sees in life a scene of disorder, misgovernment, lawlessness; and it feels that its object of worship must be one who can put these things right by possession of the opposite qualities. Therefore its God is its king, its judge, its lawgiver. He dwells in the high and holy place, but His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. His throne is in heaven, but it is prepared for judgment. His elevation is not the lofty seat of Epicurean indifference; it is the eminence from whose height He can survey all. His attitude towards the world is that of perpetual command, a command from which there can be no appeal. He speaks, and the earth trembles; He utters His voice, and the hills shake. Nature and man are alike His messengers. Not only is there no room for a rival, but there is no room for a second. The Jew sees nothing but the theocracy, he has no place in the world for second causes. Whatever befalls, whether

Digitized by Google

of good or ill, he immediately and without hesitation refers to the King of kings. If the path of life is strewn with flowers, it is the hand of God that strews them; if the journey of life is beset with thorns, it is the hand of God that plants them. In the season of national disaster, in the hour of personal danger, there is no admission for the conception of accident or chance or contingency. The Jew looks the cloud in the face, and says, 'Shall evil be in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' To him the personal God has all the force of the pantheistic God. He feels himself impelled by a resistless decree. He dares not look back to question it; it has for him no reason beyond the fact of its existence. It constitutes in one breath his weakness and his strength; it makes him nothing, and it makes him all. He ceases to have any will; he becomes the instrument of a divine will; but the very sense of his instrumentality makes him wondrously strong. It leads him to battle against overpowering numbers, it ensures him victory with insignificant resources. He becomes great by reason of his humility, he grows terrible through his fear of God.

Such is the spirit of the Jewish theocracy, essentially a spirit of inspiration. Theism appears here not simply as a creed, but as a life-power. As a mere matter of history, the belief in God is to the Jew a more potent secular force than the belief in worldly principles is to the worldling. Are we then

Digitized by Google

able to rest here? Have we found in this Theism our highest ideal of that relation which should subsist beween the human and the divine? In whatever light we view the worship of Judaism, we shall be forced to give a negative answer. Christianity accepts Judaism as its forerunner, yet Christianity professes to supply a missing link in the Judaic relation between God and man. What is that link? In one sense, the weak point of the relationship is the very rigidness of the chain that binds them. Judaism contemplates God simply as a king. It views Him constantly in His superintendence, but it is the superintendence of power: He speaks to His creatures only as the lawgiver. It is plain that such a government, by its very absoluteness, tends to divorce God from man. The very conception of law implies estrangement; where *everything* is regulated by law, there must be an utter absence of spontaneous harmony. The desideratum in the Jewish worship is a sense of sympathy on the part of the worshipper; and a sense of sympathy cannot exist where there is not a perception of equality. Place God at the summit of the chain, and man at the foot of it, and however rigidly you may connect the intermediate links, you have practically severed the human and the divine; you can only unite them by maintaining that man is immediately linked with God. Judaism bound God to man by a most rigid relation, but it was the relation of law: God stood at one end of the

Digitized by Google

universe, man stood at the other. The medium which connected them was not the divine life, but the divine command. The command pushed the creature from without, it could not impel him from within. He was the perpetual subject of divine law, he had never once been subject to the influence of divine will. There was demanded, by the heart of humanity, another form of relationship. Judaism answered the problem of providence on the divine side, it did not touch it on the human side; it vindicated the majesty of God, but it did not meet the claim to the liberty of man.

It was this human side of the problem, this necessity for an immediate intercourse between the soul and the object of its worship, which originated the third mode of relationship, by which it was attempted to explain the working of God in the world. Epicurean Deism divorced altogether the divine from the human, Judaic Theism united them only as the subject is united to the sovereign; men sought a form of union which should join them in their essence, which should furnish that basis of equality on which might be built a sympathetic worship. If the representative religion of ancient Deism is the creed of Epicurus, if the highest form of pre-Christian Theism is the religion of the Jews, the representative of this third tendency is the philosophically developed faith of India. We have seen that the religion of India was originally occupied

Digitized by Google

with the problem, What is God ? and that it found Him in the cosmical life of the universe. Its second stage was the problem we are now considering. When it passed from its perceptive into its reflective period, it set itself to inquire, What connection this cosmical life of the universe bore to the lives of individual men ? In answering this question, the Indian mind was guided by an opposite motive to that which actuated the Jew. The Jew was in search of a superintending sovereign, the Indian was in search of a uniting or equalizing medium. Accordingly the Indian was imperatively driven to such a view of individual life as would annul its distinction from the divine life. Was there any theory by which it could be held that the personal life of man was, even in its nothingness, a portion of the cosmical life of God ? There was such a theory. Was not this world the dream of God ? were not the stages of earthly existence but the thoughts which flitted through the sleep of the divine Spirit ? The moment God begins to create, He begins to sleep ; His creation is itself an illusion of sleep, a dream. When He passes into what we call the world of reality, He passes into His own world of unreality ; He sleeps, He dreams, and His dream is the life of all that is. It lives only in His imagining, it breathes only in His vision. What the dramatist said in metaphor, the Indian said in sober fact, ' We are such stuff as dreams are made of.' Our being was but the sleeping

Digitized by Google

life of God; in itself it was nothingness, delusion, vanity, and it was destined to vanish when the divine Spirit should awake. There is nothing which so impresses the Indian as this intrinsic delusiveness, this vanity of individual existence. When he tries to contemplate himself outside the life of God, he is obliged to desert the simile of the dream, but he still seeks for such a simile as will remind him of his nothingness. His favourite metaphor is derived from the waters of the ocean. The personal being of man is but a few drops of spray which have been cast up accidentally by some mighty sea, and have fallen as it were into a bottle. Here they are enclosed for a time, they are held in captivity, they are prevented from going back to their native element of boundlessness. At last at death the bottle is broken, and the drops mingle again with the ocean; the individual is lost in the universal, man is obliterated in the life of God.

In this Indian metaphor our modern interest attaches to the point which was least interesting to the ancient world. We are anxious to know, not so much what becomes of the drops, as what becomes of the bottle. The bottle is in this case the element of reality, because it is the cause of individuality. We are naturally curious to learn how it has been broken, and if there are any fragments which remain, and if there are none, how so complete an annihilation could have been accomplished? This is precisely what the Indian religion does not tell us. Approaching

Digitized by Google

the problem from different sides, and prompted to its solution by different motives, the Indian and the Jew have arrived at the same goal,—the depression of the individual consciousness. The God of Judaism was too far away, but His was the transcendence of imperial power, beneath which the personal life of man was compelled to be voiceless. The God of Brahminism was so near, that He was inseparable from the being of the personal life, but His was a nearness which absorbed all existence into its own atmosphere, and made it impossible for the individual to retain any personal life. In his efforts to exalt the God of the theocracy, the Jew depressed the existence of the creature; in his efforts to find a unity between the human and the divine, the Indian totally obliterated that existence. Was there any view of God which could at one and the same moment preserve both His farness and His nearness? Was there any theory of the divine relation to the universe which would enable man to contemplate God as his king, and which yet at the same time would enable him to view God as in union with his soul? Was there any imaginable process by which the contemplation of God's kinghood would bring Him really near to the sympathies of the individual life, and by which the contemplation of His oneness with humanity would exalt Him in human thought to the dignity of a king? This was the question which constituted the providential problem of the ancient world, and this

Digitized by Google

was the question which the ancient world did not succeed in answering. It had all the elements of an answer, but it wanted the link to bind them. It failed to find that thought which could unite the seemingly opposite thoughts of transcendence and equality, of power over man and sympathy with man. With either of these elements wanting, no theory of providence could be complete, and no view of providence could be satisfactory. A God who was no king could be no power; a God who was all kinghood could be no help. Man's intellect and man's incapacity alike demanded a superintending intelligence; man's heart not less strongly demanded an intelligence which was not so much superintending as for the time commensurate with his own, an intelligence which could think for him because it could think with him, and which could provide what was good for man because it knew what was in man.

Now there was one idea which, had it been found by the ancient world, would have reconciled into beautiful harmony these extremes of human thought. There was awaiting the world in the future a common element in which the two opposing elements of farness and nearness should become one, in which the idea of transcendence was to suggest the thought of sympathy, and in which the thought of sympathetic nearness was to suggest the idea of transcendence. That common element was the conception of headship. As long as the conception of the theocracy

Digitized by Google

expressed itself merely in the thought of a system of political government, there was in its picture of providence a necessary discrepancy between the idea of law and the idea of love: God was simply the ruler, and the ruler exists only in his distinction from the subject. But there is clearly another species of government than the political one,—a government which finds its expression not in the construction of a state, but in the organism of a body, whose kinghood is headship, and whose subjection is membership. The moment we have exchanged the name of king for the title of head, we have exchanged a whole train of associations for another and an opposite train. The moment we contemplate humanity as an organism of which God is the head, we have given to the kinghood of God a contrary significance to that which we give to the kinghood of men. For let us but consider what is implied in that sovereignty which the head of a body exercises over its members. It certainly indicates a superior power; but how is that power attained? by becoming the servant of all. The head is always king of the members, but it is their king because it is their minister. It is their servant both in what it takes from them, and in what it gives to them. It may be said to take from them all their possible sufferings. Whatever impressions of pain are encountered by the members become immediately the impressions of the head, are carried up to the centre of the bodily

Digitized by Google

government. The head becomes heir to all the suffering of every member, whatever it may be, and whenever it may occur. If the human body were conceived as perpetually growing, and if in its growth it were regarded as continually evolving new members, the principle would be still the same,—every new member in the very moment of its evolution would make the head the heir to all the imperfections it possessed, and to all the pains it might encounter.[1] But the other side of the picture is not less true: if the head becomes heir to the burdens of every member, every member becomes heir to the power of the head; this is a distinct law in the constitution of each human body. There are descending as well as ascending nerves in the human frame; the head has to serve the body not only by getting, but by giving. It has not merely to receive the impressions which are communicated to any part of the physical structure; it has to send down to the part thus affected a portion of its own motive power. If the hand is burned, the head feels the pain; but it is the head which gives to the hand the power to withdraw itself from the fire. Here is a double service which the centre of human life has to perform: it has to minister to the body at once by sharing its sufferings and by imparting its own strength. It is king over the body just in proportion as it fulfils these offices;

[1] Hence Paul assumes that generic expiation does not exhaust divine suffering (Col. i. 24).

Digitized by Google

its power to rule is its power to minister, its theocracy is its sympathy, its kinghood is its ability to bear.

Now let us suppose that such a conception had entered the mind of the ancient world,—let us suppose it had conceived the idea that every man if he desired it could enter into the same relation with God as the member of a human body bears to the head of that body,—would not the result have been a complete reconciliation of its providential difficulties? These seemingly opposite ideas which heathendom vainly strove to amalgamate, would have been found not only capable of amalgamation, but involving a necessity to union. The sovereignty of God would have ceased to be contradictory to the human interest of God; the power of His sovereignty over man would have been seen to be proportionate to the power of His interest in man; and the heathen world would have felt what the Christian world subsequently felt, that God 'ought to suffer that He might enter into His glory.' Yet this possibility of a kinghood arising out of a divine participation in human weakness, is precisely that thought which is distinctive of the Christian religion. Perfection through suffering is an idea which essentially belongs to the dispensation of the Cross. The nearest approach which the pre-Christian world can make to it is the hope of perfection in spite of suffering, the possibility that a man may suffer and yet be strong. It is in the doctrine of the divine headship that Christianity

Digitized by Google

expresses at once the power and the reasonableness of this thought; here it vindicates the majesty of God, and yet identifies that majesty with the bearing of the cross. As a mere matter of history, it is to Christianity we must look for the solution of the heathen problem, the missing link which joins its difficulties.[1] It is where the second person of the Christian Trinity, who is all along contemplated as the human archetype, takes upon Himself the headship of humanity, that for the first time in the history of religion we are able to say, 'Heaven and earth are met together.'

Let us now proceed to unfold this new thought. Paul declares that Christ is the head of the Church, that is to say, the head of all who ever have desired or who ever shall desire to be united to God. We wish in these lectures to avoid all questions of particularism and universalism, and therefore we shall seek to employ a formula which may find acceptance with both parties. We shall say, then, that in the doctrine of the New Testament Christ is the potential head of all humanity, implying thereby that the power resides within Him of embracing an infinite membership. Now it is plain on the very surface that there must have been a time at which this union was begun in history. Even conceding that ideally it existed for ever in the thought of God, we shall still be obliged to ask at

[1] Appendix, Note 8.

Digitized by Google

what period this divine thought became historical? Can we point to a time in the earthly life of the Son of man when He began to recognise Himself not merely as an individual man, but as the head of a human organism, comprehending already a few members, and destined to comprehend myriads? Here we are confronted by two schools of evangelical opinion, which perhaps find their most prominent representatives in Luther and Calvin. In the view of Luther, Christ became the historical head of the Church only by the act of resurrection; His headship was the result of His exaltation. In the view of Calvin, Christ was the historical head of the Church previous to His crucifixion, and suffered crucifixion in that capacity; His headship was a part of His humiliation. We have no hesitation whatever in preferring the view of Calvin, and in taking it as the standpoint from which to compare Christian theology with pre-Christian religion. Nevertheless we must remark that if the evidence pointed in favour of the Lutheran doctrine, it would in no degree invalidate the specific argument of this lecture. Our position is simply this: We believe the answer to the second problem of antiquity to be the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, we believe the Christian incarnation to be not an act but a process, and we believe the completing stage of that process to be the headship of Christ over the Church. If it should be found that this headship only becomes

Digitized by Google

a fact of history when the Son of man rises from the dead, we should simply conclude that the process of incarnation only finds its completion in the fact of resurrection. Incarnation is in our view a completed fact the moment the divine headship is a historical reality. We believe that as a historical reality it preceded the sacrificial death of the Son of man, and we shall endeavour, with the reverence which befits so great a subject, and at the same time with the respect which is due to those who hold a contrary opinion, to indicate the line of thought which has led us to this conclusion.

The incarnation of Christ is, we believe, designed to be represented not as an act but as a process; and this fact, if fact it be, separates it essentially and generically from all heathen incarnations whatsoever. We are popularly in the habit of supposing that the Son of God has become Son of man in the infant dawn of Bethlehem; in reality, this dawn of Bethlehem is but a stage towards incarnation, and if we have read St. Paul aright, it is not the first stage. That apostle distinctly indicates that before the Son of God could begin to be filled with humanity, He had to be divested of something which distanced Him from humanity;[1] he expresses this in no qualified terms when he says, 'He emptied Himself.' Incarnation in the Pauline view begins with a species of

[1] For the questions touching Christ's humiliation, see Professor Bruce's Cunningham Lecture on the 'Humiliation of Christ.'

Digitized by Google

death. The Son of God, in His passage from heaven to earth, experiences that process of impoverishment which is supposed by believers in immortality to precede the passage from earth to heaven. What was that process of impoverishment? Are we in a position to trace it? Shall we say with some of the modern Germans, that He emptied His omnipotence into a human power, His omniscience into a human knowledge, His immensity into a human form, His eternity into a human lifetime? Perhaps we are not qualified to say this? We are not entitled to go further than to affirm that He emptied Himself of that which made union with humanity impossible; and we cannot assume that such a union was rendered impossible by the possession of infinite power and infinite knowledge. We shall not, therefore, seek to penetrate beyond the simplicity of the Pauline statement. That statement extends not beyond the assertion that incarnation implied death as its forerunner; it makes that assertion, and it rests there. It tells us that to become man, the Son of God had to cease to be something else, but what that something is it does not inquire; it says that He emptied Himself of His glory, but it does not define His glory. All that we can gather from the remarkable passage in which it occurs, is the impression of a great struggle towards the possibility of incarnation.[1] We seem to be confronted by a descending ladder of humiliations. At

[1] Appendix, Note 9.

Digitized by Google

its summit stands One in the form of God; at its base stands One under the shadow of death in its meanest and most revolting aspect. Between the extremes there has to be interposed a new nature; the form of God must be eclipsed by the form of man. The assumption of the new nature demands the expulsion of all antagonisms in the old, and the expulsion of such antagonisms is the emptying out of His glory; the elements of empire have to be replaced by the elements of ministration, the form of God has to become the servant's form.

When we pass from this supersensuous process to the Christ of the actual world, we find the positive side of that for which there had been a negative preparation. The emptying has been completed, and the replenishing has to begin; the elements of the old glory have been expelled, and the elements of the new life have to be implanted. These elements are implanted one by one. The goal of the human Christ is not merely to be a man, but to be the universal man,—the potential head of humanity; only in the reaching of that goal can His incarnation be accomplished. In preparation for this mission, He must fill all the phases of humanity, each in turn and each in perfection. He must be the perfect child, that He may be the head of all childhood; the perfect youth, that He may be the head of all youth; the perfect man, that He may be the head of all manhood. His humanity grows like all

Digitized by Google

humanity, but it stands alone in the fact that each stage of its development is in itself completely rounded. His childhood is not a supernatural childhood,—in other words, He is not a man at the same moment that He is a child,—yet His tender years represent in full perfection those qualities whose partial manifestation attract us to the childhood of ordinary humanity. His youth is not a supernatural youth; it grows in wisdom and in knowledge, yet it represents in full perfection the qualities whose partial manifestation makes the spectacle of youth beautiful in the lives of common men. Into the history of that growth itself we are scarcely permitted to penetrate; a veil rests over the early life of the human Jesus. So far as we can see behind the veil, it would seem that in the mental growth of the Son of man the God-consciousness preceded the man-consciousness; or, to express it less in German and more in English, it would seem that His thoughts toward God came earlier into play than His thoughts toward man. On the one occasion in which we are permitted to get a glimpse of the maturing life, we find that life pervaded and absorbed by the solemnity of its divine relationship. The heavenly vision for a time hides the earthly one, and there is a tone almost of surprise in the accents in which the child in the temple questions the right of any claim to compete with that of divine mediation: 'Wist ye not that I should be about my Father's business?' At last, at the baptism on the banks of

Digitized by Google

Jordan, we seem to have reached the culmination of this earlier consciousness. In the opened heavens, and the descending dove-like Spirit, and the voice out of the cloud proclaiming the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, the heavenly vision which has illumined His childhood and His youth reaches its highest blaze of glory, and His human consciousness of God attains its highest point of fulness.

And now, although there is no direct statement of the fact, we are made aware, as we pursue the narrative, that we have entered on a new phase of it. Hitherto we have been in companionship almost exclusively with the Son of God; we are now to walk side by side with One who is becoming increasingly the Son of man. As the narrative advances, that humbler name takes increasing precedence of the loftier one. We see the Christ pressing forward to meet that human relationship which has hitherto remained in abeyance. He abandons the contemplation of the temple, He abandons the mystic vision on the banks of Jordan, He abandons the solitary struggle in the wilderness for a life which is essentially human. He plunges into the great ocean of humanity, and wrestles with its waves. His earthly history becomes a life of almost incessant action: He heals the sick, He cleanses the leper, He seeks and saves the lost. The heart of humanity is touched by a presence so intensely yet so divinely human. He gathers around Him a little band of followers, humble

Digitized by Google

and unlearned, but strong in the ardour of their devotion. The condition which He demands of them is faith; He asks before all things, and as the requisite to all things, an implicit trust in His own person. Their faith deepens as the journey advances. The Master and His disciples are ever drawing nearer one another, and each is bringing to the other a different gift: He is coming to them with a crown, they are coming to Him with a cross; when the union is complete, the cross and the crown will meet together.

That union is complete at the last supper; there the Son of God becomes, in the highest sense, the Son of man, enters on the final stage of His historical union with humanity. At this hour He has ceased to view Himself as an isolated individual; He has become the head of an organism,—an organism which historically comprehends as yet only His little band of primitive members, but which is destined to expand into vast dimensions.[1] He feels Himself to be the potential head of all humanity; that, so far as He is concerned, He has strength sufficient to impart to all; that if the power of His life be limited, it is limited by man. He expresses this sense of vital union by a striking figure: He distributes the elements of bread and wine as the symbols of His broken body and His outpoured blood. He exhibits His sense of organic

[1] The rudiments of a completed body are already hidden in the germ. Comp. Col. ii. 10.

Digitized by Google

nearness by a not less striking ceremony: He washes with His own hands the feet of His disciples,—a type of the new power which the head was to impart to the members, and then He breaks into the utterance of triumph: 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.' He is conscious of a new phase in His mission,—a phase which has brought the divine organically nearer to the human, which has bridged the physical inequality, which has made the two one. His last supper is the counterpart of His baptism; on the banks of Jordan He had seen in its full strength His alliance with the divine; at the last supper He beholds in its full strength His alliance with the human. Heaven and earth have now met together, the supernatural has united itself to the natural, and the divine headship has become the human glory. In that remarkable discourse which follows the solemn communion, the thought of that communion is reflected from beginning to end. Never for a moment does the Son of man lose sight of the perfected relationship between the head and the members; it underlies every utterance of His closing charge. It is assumed throughout that all which is His, is henceforth the property of His disciples, that the partnership is too close between them to admit of separate possessions. He bequeaths to them His own peace, He communicates to them His own joy, He declares that where He is there they must be also. He tells them that their relation to Him is henceforth

Digitized by Google

that of the branches to the vine, that they have no life apart from Him, that He has no life unshared by them; He no longer asks them to come to Him, He entreats them to abide in Him. Here is the true beginning of the New Testament kingdom of God. There has begun for the world a new theocracy,—a theocracy in which God is more than ever before revealed as the Sovereign of humanity, but it is a sovereignty which is purchased by the most intimate union with humanity, a union which makes it possible that God should suffer when man suffers. This striking combination of what the world would call opposites, rises into its full grandeur before the judgment-seat of Pilate. Here, in explicit terms, the Son of man claims the title of king, and claims it at the very hour when, to the world's eye, He seems most unkingly. Yet He claims it not in spite of His humiliation, but by reason of His humiliation. So far from admitting that His kinghood is tarnished or impugned by His aspect of intense humanity, He declares that all along this union with humanity was contemplated as the road to His theocratic power: 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' His kinghood, He says, lies in His service of truth, in His power to be a martyr to truth. The theocracy has revived by stooping. The empire of God over man, which had been forgotten in the divine distance, becomes manifest in the divine nearness, and

Digitized by Google

in bearing the body of humanity He bears the sceptre of the soul.

It will be seen that this view of the incarnation brings this doctrine to the very borders of that other truth which forms the centre of the Christian system, —the doctrine of atonement. It seems to us, indeed, that the different works which compose the mission of the Son of man cannot be separated from each other by a spatial measurement,—in other words, cannot be distinguished by being respectively referred to separate acts of Jesus. It will not, for example, do to say that one historical incident exhibits Him as a revelation, another as an incarnation, and a third as an atonement. We believe it will be found that every historical act of the Son of man illustrates at one and the same time every part of His mission. We speak of Him as an example, as a revealer, and as an atoner, yet He is the three in one. There is an atonement in His revelation, there is a revelation in His atonement, there is an example in both. There is, indeed, a very close connection between the completed doctrine of incarnation and the opening doctrine of the atonement. The completed incarnation is in our view Christ's headship over His Church. This truth is known in theology by the name of the 'Mystical Union.' It is called mystical, because it is a union impalpable to sense. No man has ever seen that mysterious process by which the Son of man has become the head of a human organism.

Digitized by Google

Myriads have felt, as an accomplished fact, their membership in the divine body, but no one has professed to understand by what method it has been accomplished. Yet, be it observed, that if this doctrine is mystical in itself, it takes away the mysticism from everything else; the moment we have accepted this mystery, we have solved all others. If we shall consent to receive this doctrine as the statement of an accomplished fact, we shall find in it the key to every subsequent enigma in the scheme of Christian theology; if we do not consent so to receive it, we shall be forced to regard the entire scheme of Christian theology as outside the range of human consciousness, and therefore unnatural. The doctrine of atonement especially will be found to receive great part of its solution in the recognition of the mystical union. No theologian would be justified in attempting a scientific exposition of the reconciling work of Christ, who did not assume as the basis of that work, the fact of the mystical union. If he refused to accept this as a basis, he may indeed believe in the efficacy of an atonement, but he will believe in its efficacy not on principles of science, but on principles of unquestioning faith. But although it is impossible to treat scientifically the doctrine of atonement without considering this completed form of the doctrine of incarnation, it cannot be said that the converse is true; it is quite possible to treat the incarnate headship of Christ without any reference to the fact of

Digitized by Google

atonement. We have hitherto considered this divine headship altogether in its providential aspect. We have said that in this final form of the Christian incarnation, whatever exists in the members is appropriated by the head, but we have not as yet assumed that there is any sin in the members. We have assumed that there is suffering, that there is finitude, that there is need of a providential and a theocratic government, and we have found that these conditions may be met in a headship which can bear the human suffering, and communicate in exchange the divine power. Yet we have no reason to say that all this might not have been without any sin on the part of the members. Man is finite as well as sinful; might not his finitude have needed the divine support even had his will remained pure? There are not wanting in the writings of St. Paul certain indications of the belief that the incarnation of the Son of man was required not merely to *redeem*, but to *complete* creation. He seems to imply that, apart altogether from the question of sin, the divine ideal of humanity was only wrought out in Christ; the first Adam was merely a living soul, the second was a quickening spirit. If it be so, the great doctrine of the Christian incarnation has a wider place in human history than to be the supply of a historical emergency; it becomes the goal of human history itself, the ground on which it was said, 'Let us make man.' It takes its rank as the true seventh morning of creation, the Sabbath

Digitized by Google

in which the divine thought rests in the joy of its completed ideal, and pronounces it very good. It is the realization of that of which the first Adam and the primeval paradise are but the prophecy,—the union of the image of man with the eternal life of God.

All this, however, has been rendered an idle speculation by the course of this world's history; it is bootless to inquire what might have been when we see what actually is. Creation has not been suffered to pursue its triumphant march. There is an evil in the members of the human body deeper than physical suffering, and more positive than individual finitude. It matters not how we attempt to explain it; we are compelled on every theory to acknowledge its baleful presence. We may call it an effect, we may speak of it as a disease, we may define it as the violation of a divine law; all definitions and explanations must alike presuppose its existence as a disorder in the moral nature of the soul. Its origin is a mystery, its essence is a mystery, the very laws of its working are in great measure a mystery; the one fact on which nature and revelation agree is the fact that, however it came and whatever it be, it exists as a portentous reality, and a source of war in the universe. No moral religion can ignore the fact of sin; Christianity, the most moral of all religions, can least consent to ignore it. It is impossible that a faith which is grounded specially on the ethical nature of man,

Digitized by Google

should be content to exclude from its theocracy the element which of all others is the greatest barrier to man's ethical nature. Christianity demands that the providence of God, or, which is the same thing, the headship of God over humanity, shall find a place in its great power for the repression and destruction of this moral foe. It is because the Christian consciousness makes this demand that the Christian system has not stopped short with the doctrine of an incarnation. It has recognised in the human soul a sense of moral responsibility which lifts it outside the category of a mere subject, and demands for it a higher mode of relationship than that which subsists between the sovereign and his slave; he who is possessed of a moral nature must be ruled by a moral power. We are now, therefore, naturally brought to consider that doctrine of atonement which, as a matter of fact, is the goal of the mystical union. Let it be understood that we do not propose in these lectures to view either this or any other doctrine in itself. Every Christian truth has two sides; it has one side pointing to God, and another side pointing to man. The man who, on the divine side, shall solve the problems of trinity, incarnation, and atonement, shall have reached the theory of this universe. Ours is a humbler aim. We do not attempt to explain the absolute science of religion; we seek to analyse into its natural elements the religion which claims to be absolute. We do not ask why, in the nature of God,

Digitized by Google

these things were bound to be; we ask how their being is adapted to the religious nature of man. Our method proceeds rather on the Kantian than on the Hegelian line; we do not deny that there must be a rhythm in the universe, nor even that it may be possible to detect its movement, but we here confine ourselves exclusively to the immediate objects of human consciousness. We seek at present only for such a science of religion as it is possible to construct on the historical needs of humanity, on the wants of the human soul as they are revealed in human history. We have seen that Christianity has met such needs in its doctrine of a triune God, we have seen that it has supplied such wants in its promulgation of an incarnate headship; we have yet to see what solution it has to offer of the great problem of moral unrest.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE IV.

THE THIRD PRE-CHRISTIAN PROBLEM.

WE have now arrived at the third of those great questions which exercised the pre-Christian mind, Is the glory of God consistent with the existence of moral evil?—a question which brings us into direct contact with the undisputed mystery of sin. It cannot be uninteresting to know what the ancient world thought on this subject. Sin is one of those elements with which natural theology and revealed theology are alike called to deal; and before revealed theology can enter upon this field, it demands that the natural consciousness shall have felt the perplexity of the problem. Christianity only professes to offer rest on this question when the natural mind has been awakened into an individual unrest, and therefore here, more than anywhere else, the light of revelation makes its appeal to a preliminary light of nature. Accordingly it becomes important to inquire, What is the testimony of this light of nature? what are those historical needs which require to exist in the soul ere the fulness of that time can arrive when Christianity shall encounter the problem of moral evil?

Digitized by Google

Now it seems to us that there have been four phases in the pre-Christian consciousness of sin, the highest being the union of the other three. They are represented by the four forms of religion,—Buddhism, Platonism, Parsism, and Judaism. Looking at these rather in their logical than in their chronological sequence, we begin with the creed of Buddhism.[1] The central truth in the doctrine of Buddha is the recognition of the fact that there is a disorder in the moral universe. So impressed is the Buddhist with this fact, that it constitutes the foundation of his whole system, and determines the character of his whole teaching. He is convinced that in the nature of things there is something radically wrong. If we ask him to point to its source, his answer shows how radical he believes the evil to be. He declares the source of evil to be, not anything in existence, but existence itself. The moral disorder of the universe is the fact that it is no universe, but a series of individual parts, each living for itself, each striving with the other. Individual life is selfishness. The moment a man has said, *I* think, *I* feel, *I* desire, that instant he has separated himself from the great bosom of humanity on which his life once lay; he has become an independent streamlet, whose course is solitary, whose waters are bitterness. The birth of every life breaks anew the infinite calm. It destroys the equal brotherhood of death, it ushers the world

[1] Appendix, Note 10.

Digitized by Google

into a war of elements whose motive is self-love, and whose goal is mutual extermination. Existence is individualism, individualism is self-consciousness, self-consciousness is selfishness, selfishness is desire, desire is want, want is misery: these are the links of the brazen chain which life weaves for her victims.[1]

Amid all the extravagance of this wild pessimism, Buddhism has flashed out one great truth—the identification of selfishness with moral misery; the entire ethical character of its philosophy is based upon this recognition. But let us advance a step further. The Buddhist cannot admit that this moral disorder is purely a matter of thought. He holds distinctly that whatever it was in its origin, it has become in its development an actual essence, if not a physical substance. It would never have occurred to the Buddhist to suppose for an instant that the moral disorder of the human mind could be removed by any excess of remorseful feeling, or by any exhibition of personal penitence. It was the opinion of the Buddhist that the moral disorder had long since become impersonal, and could only be removed by the death of the personality. He believed that the life of every man left behind him an aggregate result of his moral actions,—in other words, of his sinful actions. These aggregate results of individual lives had by this time accumulated into one great essence; the Buddhist

[1] This seems the natural chain, though the Buddhist philosophy adopts another.

Digitized by Google

called it Karma. It was to him no generalization, no imagination, no mere expression of poetry; it was an actual substance, strictly speaking the only real substance in the universe. Karma was the only thing in the individual which survived the individual; all else returned into its native nothingness; this was too strong to be conquered immediately even by death. Karma, the accumulated result of sin, was that which perpetuated a man, which carried his evil nature into other souls, which denied him the joy of getting back to that bosom of humanity where individual life ceased for ever. There was no transmigration of souls in Buddhism; its second births were really new births. When a man died, all that remained of him was the Karma,—the accumulated fire which his own passions had helped to kindle,—and in contact with that lurid flame the torch of a new life was lighted. The Buddhist would have said with Shakespeare, but would have said without a metaphor, 'The evil that men do, lives after them.'

Let us here pause for a moment to note a strange feature in comparative theology. The Buddhist makes the punishment of sin to be life; the Jew holds it to be death. The Buddhist regards sin as itself the immortal principle, the thing which keeps the world alive; the Jew looks upon it as the hindrance to the immortal principle, the element which prevents the soul from entering into eternal life. It is a strange contrast in the expression of human thought, yet we

Digitized by Google

think the contrast lies chiefly in the expression. The Buddhist and the Jew are morally agreed,—they are at one in making the consequence of sin the most fearful of all consequences; they differ only as to what consequence *is* the most fearful. To the Jew, the most miserable thought in the world is the thought of death; with sin, therefore, he links the thought of death. To the Buddhist, the most miserable idea in the world is the idea of life; with sin, therefore, he links the idea of life. Life is to the Buddhist what death is to the Jew,—the emblem of nothingness, vanity, corruption. Death is to him the reality of things, their normal state, their natural condition; life breaks the normal state, and ushers the world into an existence which is an illusion, a dream, a phantom of the night. The Buddhist, therefore, is ideally the ally of the Jew, though in form of expression he is his opponent. He holds the moral disorder of the universe to be the perpetuation of nothingness, only he calls that nothingness by the name of life. The sole question between them on this subject is, whether life or death shall be esteemed the greater evil, and it is not difficult to see that even the pre-Christian world must here come round to the standpoint of the Jew. Pessimism reacts against itself, despair by its very nature cannot last for ever, and we may shortly expect to find the ideal of life enthroned where the ideal of death now reigns.

Digitized by Google

That consummation is reached in Platonism.[1] Platonism differs from Buddhism in its ideal of the absolutely good. To Buddhism the absolutely good thing is non-existence; to Platonism it is fulness of existence. The change in this ideal of happiness produces a change in the relation between sin and life. Buddhism had made sin the perpetuation of life; as long as the Karma endured, an element of the old nature remained immortal; the destruction of sin alone could destroy the immortal principle. But with Platonism the immortal principle was of all things that most loved and reverenced, and the principle of decay and death was of all things that most hated and shunned. Hence, in the system of the Platonist, the conception of moral evil was wedded to the conception of materialism, because in the system of the Platonist materialism was the symbol of death. Matter to the Platonic philosopher was almost the synonym for nothingness. It was a negative element, a phantom, a species of illusion which had yet all the power of a reality, which could mar the life of the soul, which could oppose a barrier even to the infinite soul. Wherever there was fulness of life there was fulness of virtue; wherever there was a diminution of life there was the presence of moral evil. Wherever matter obtained an empire, it brought a diminution of life, and brought therefore at the same time a diminution of virtue. Matter had obtained an empire

[1] Appendix, Note 11.

Digitized by Google

over the soul of man, and that empire was the moral fall of the soul. By its incorporation in the bodily form, it lost sight of 'the imperial palace whence it came,' and became the slave of a foreign master. The foreign element which that incorporation thrust upon it was corruption. To the Platonist the element of physical corruption or death was so closely allied with the element of moral corruption or sin, that it is hard to say which he considered the effect and which the cause; we can say, however, with certainty, that in his system sin was death; and in making this statement we have reached the second phase in the pre-Christian consciousness of moral evil. Buddhism had clearly discerned that there was a disorder in the moral universe; Platonism discerned that it was a deadly disorder. In thus associating sin with death, the Platonist was at one with the Jew; nor would he have found any contradiction in the alleged discrepancy between Genesis and geology. If he had been told by the geologist that death existed in the world previous to the historical date of the fall, his answer would have been something like this: 'Undoubtedly it did; death existed wherever matter existed; it was involved in the animal nature. Sin itself is simply the nature of an animal, and therefore the death-nature. It is no sin in the animal to possess that nature; corruption is the law of its being, and therefore we can impute to it no moral evil. But let a new and higher life be superinduced upon the animal

Digitized by Google

life, let the spirit of humanity be breathed over the beast of the field, and immediately the nature of the animal will become antagonistic to the nature of the man. That which was not sin in the beast of the field, shall become sin in the life which is born from above. When man gave way to his passions, he gave way to the animal within him; that which in itself was not evil, became evil in him, and for this very reason, that he received a nature which was not his own. He became heir to a corruption which was not meant for him. Death was all along the property of the material universe; man was not naturally material, and therefore should have passed it by. But when his spirit stooped to the forms of matter, he received their portion, and that portion was death. He reaped the corruption which he had sown; he became heir to that possession which was the inheritance of the animal life.'

That is the answer Plato would have given to the alleged discrepancy between Genesis and geology with regard to the connection of sin and death. It will be seen that to Plato, as to Buddha, sin was almost a physical existence; it was contemplated very much as an actual substance. Accordingly, to Plato as to Buddha, sin was something which could only be overcome by the crucifixion of the physical. It never would have occurred to him that a man could conquer sin by simply repenting of it: sin had its ground in the physical nature; it was a principle of death, and therefore it must be eradicated by a

Digitized by Google

process of death. If the individual would be purified, he must have his animal nature crucified; must cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye in which corruption dwelt, in order that he might enter into life without the elements of death. His sin was his selfishness, his selfishness was his animality, his animality was his absence of immortality; before he could become immortal, it was imperative that his self-life should die. In all this there was much in which Platonism resembled Judaism, and perhaps still more in which it anticipated Christianity. There was, however, one thing still wanting to complete those elements which compose the Christian consciousness of sin. It had been seen that there was a disorder in the moral universe, and it had been seen that this disorder involved the fact of death, but it had not yet been maintained that death was to man the penalty of sin. It had been recognised that man had become heir to a possession which placed him at a physical distance from God, but in the systems we have hitherto considered we have heard nothing of a moral distance from God. Yet there was even now existing in the world a religious system whose special characteristic was the very element desiderated,—a system expressly based on the perception of a moral separation between the human and the divine, and expressly directed towards the solution of the problem how the impure soul of man was to approach the burning purity of God.

Digitized by Google

That religious system was Parsism.[1] As we have already said, Parsism probably began with the recognition of the divine unity, but it was unable to retain that belief. Its sense of the moral discrepancies which seem to prevail in the universe overmastered its sense of the unity of God. It was unable to see how the government of a good God could suffer the existence of so much that was not good, and it came to the conclusion that there must be two gods. This world could not be ruled by one absolute principle of moral rectitude; there must clearly be a counteracting principle of evil sharing the throne of the universe. There was a kingdom of light, but there was a kingdom of darkness too, and the darkness was at war with the light. God was not sovereign of the world; He was only sovereign of the bright half of the world. But there was also a dark half, and over that hemisphere there reigned a power of darkness. The empire of the universe was divided; there was war between heaven and earth. The power of darkness had obtained an entrance into the heart of man, and the power of light was struggling to regain the supremacy. The Parsee saw that struggle embodied in the symbols of visible nature. Nowhere is this symbolism so strongly marked as in the Parsism of Egypt. Osiris or the Sun-god is there the special object of worship; under the symbolism of visible light he represents

[1] Appendix, Note 12.

Digitized by Google

the light of absolute purity. But he has to struggle with the principle of night, and at one time it seems as if the night would prevail. In the setting of the sun the Egyptian has symbolized the temporary extinction of purity: Osiris is slain by his rival, and buried beneath the waves, while Isis, or the earth, represents his disconsolate and widowed bride weeping in the darkness. At last the kingdom of light revives in the form of Horus, the son of Osiris, who under the symbol of the new morning sun retrieves the victory of purity, and drives back the power of darkness within the limits of his legitimate dominion.

What we have to notice in all this is the new element added to the conception of sin. It is no longer a mere disorder, it is no longer simply a principle of limitation, it is no longer even a mere source of death; it is an element of enmity between the soul and God. Buddhism had emphasized it as a disorder, Platonism had emphasized it as a source of death; it has here become something more,—a moral separation between the human and the divine. It dwells in a region apart from God, as wide apart as light is from darkness. It cannot live side by side with the light. Wherever the light enters, it must die; wherever it enters, the light must die. The two existences are incompatible; where the one is, the other cannot be. Those souls which have more light than darkness shall pass into a kingdom of light; those souls which have more darkness than light

Digitized by Google

shall pass into a kingdom of darkness; and between these kingdoms there is a great gulf fixed. Parsism is the birth of conscience in the history of the religious world. Here for the first time sin becomes a source of moral pain, man feels in sin his separation from the fountain of eternal light. It is no more to him the simple loss of immortality; it is the loss of that which alone makes immortality worth possessing,—the vision and fruition of God.

Let us see now how far we have advanced under the light of unaided nature. We have found, with Buddhism, that there is a disorder in the moral universe; we have found, with Platonism, that it is a deadly disorder; and we have found, with Parsism, that it is a disorder involving enmity with God. We are now to see all these exhibited in one system. Hitherto we have beheld them separately; they are presently to appear as the property of a single religion. That religion is Judaism. Judaism combines in one faith the elements found distinctively in Buddhism, Platonism, and Parsism. It says with the first that sin is disorder, it says with the second that sin is death, it says with the third that sin is enmity; only it places the third element between the first two. It declares sin to be death *because* it is divine enmity. Death with Judaism is the penalty of sin. 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' The words of the primeval narrative do not indeed imply that there was no death before the fall; rather the

Digitized by Google

contrary. 'Thou shalt surely die,' would have had no meaning as a threat unless death had already existed as a phenomenon. The idea is rather this: If you choose the animal life, you will be punished by receiving the animal portion. You see how already death reigns over the beast of the field; if you become like the beast of the field, it shall reign over you. If you prefer passion to principle, sense to reason, matter to spirit, self to God, you are sinking by your own will into the nature of an animal, and your reward shall assuredly be the inheritance of that last stage of corruption which awaits all sensuous things. The death with which man is threatened in the Book of Genesis is not of necessity an arbitrary punishment; nevertheless to the mind of the Jew its horror consists in the fact that it *is* a punishment. It is to him not the less penal because it grows naturally out of its antecedent sin, and because it is penal it is to him terrible. Perhaps in no religious system is death regarded with such horror as in Judaism. It is impossible to read the Old Testament without being impressed with the sharp antagonism which to the mind of the Jew subsists between life and death. In the systems of heathendom it frequently seems as if the natural antagonism had been forgotten. The Stoic succeeded in resigning himself to the thought of death; the Buddhist succeeded in making death an object of desire. But with the Jew there is no attempt at reconciliation. He recognises



Digitized by Google

in death the veritable king of terrors, and he makes no effort to conceal the terror in which he holds him. The psalms are full of the repulsion and loathing with which he shrinks from this common fate of humanity. The prayer in which Hezekiah begs for life is almost abject in its character, and is in strictest harmony with the spirit of the Jewish nation. And yet we should do that nation a great injustice were we to suppose that in its recoil from death it was chiefly or even mainly influenced by the motive of physical fear. Cowardice was at no time a characteristic of the Jewish mind; wherever it felt the presence of the theocracy, it was ready to do all and to dare all. But then in the hour of death it missed the presence of the theocracy;[1] it was a moral and not a physical fear which made death terrible to the Jew. He saw in it the sign of God's anger, the frown gathering on the Father's brow, the penalty received as the reward of his transgression. The weakness which he felt in death was not the feebleness of dissolving nature,—it was the weakness which sprang from God-desertion. In bearing the death-penalty he felt himself to be alone; the spirit of the theocracy had departed from him, and had left him to reap the harvest which his life had sown, and he was forced to cry out in his agony, 'Why art Thou so far from helping me?' We are putting no

[1] Physical death was thus only the shadow of spiritual death,—separation from God.

Digitized by Google

strained meaning upon the Jewish consciousness of death. We have only to appeal for confirmation to the latest and the most indisputable testimony of that national consciousness. Paul says in so many words that the sting of death was sin. In that saying he explains his subsequent utterance, where he declares that Christ has abolished death. Paul knew well that in any physical sense Christ had not abolished death; he himself says expressly that death is the last enemy which shall be conquered. But to Paul the sting of death was not its physical power,—it was its moral power, its power to afflict the soul with a sense of separation from God; take away that, and Paul felt that every other horror had from death been taken away. It was because he saw in Christ a removal of the sin-penalty that he could already say of death, 'O grave, where is thy victory?' On such a subject as this the testimony of Paul is of pre-eminent weight. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and was originally permeated by the spirit of Judaism. When, therefore, he says that the sting of death was sin, he expresses the consciousness of the Jewish nation. His words cast back a light upon that nation's history. They show how a people so brave, so unflinching, so resolute, could yet in perfect consistency with their character shrink in dismay from the prospect of death, for they reveal that to this people the prospect of death was nothing less than a vision of the averted face of God.

Digitized by Google

The light of nature had thus arrived at one definite conception of moral evil. It had realized the thought of sin as a state of divine enmity involving separation from God, and bringing as its consequence that penalty of death which best symbolizes the soul's absence from the source of life. Here, then, was a great gulf fixed between the human and the divine; the question which remained was, How was it to be bridged over? Who should abide in God's tabernacle? who should dwell in His holy hill? Man felt his distance to be infinite; but just because he was capable of feeling that distance, he was incapable of being satisfied with it. He sought to stretch his hands across the chasm, and he failed to reach the goal. He cried out for some other power which could reach further than his own. He cast about to find some means of restoring the broken communication between earth and heaven. There occurred to his mind two possible methods by which such a restoration might be effected. He tried them both contemporaneously, but we shall look at them each in turn; the one was mediation, the other sacrifice.

Mediation, viewed from the light of nature, is the attempt to find an intermediate intelligence who shall break the distance between God and man, and serve as a channel through which the human may communicate with the divine. Wherever the ancient world experienced the sense of distance between

Digitized by Google

itself and God, whether that distance lay in an intellectual or in a moral disability, it invariably strove to bridge it by the interposition of another nature between the nature of the highest and its own. In every form of faith where we detect the presence of dualism,—and there are few forms of ancient faith where such a presence may not be detected,—we always see the recognition of some third or uniting principle. From the Schruti of ancient Parsism to the Logos[1] of the Alexandrian Philo, we witness a continuous stream of such efforts after mediation. Judaism itself did not escape the tendency; its sense of sin was so strong, that it could not do otherwise than experience the wideness of that moral gulf which separated the soul from God, and under the pressure of such an experience it was inevitable that it should endeavour to find the source of divine communion. To the popular mind of Judaism, the angels of the Old Testament were invested with a mediating influence which the Old Testament itself did not allow them; to the philosophic mind of Judaism, the mediating influence attributed to the angels was transferred to a single intelligence, which was sometimes called the Word, and sometimes the Wisdom of God. But neither the efforts of heathendom nor the efforts of Judaism proved successful in finding a road by which the soul could pass to God. No system either of heathen or of Jewish mediation

[1] Appendix, Note 13.

Digitized by Google

ever obtained an enduring footing in the world, which is itself a convincing proof that no system of heathen or Jewish mediation ever achieved its object of restoring divine communion to the soul of man. If we ask, Whence this failure? we shall not need to wait long for an answer. The weak point in all these efforts at mediation was this, they all sought an *intermediate* intelligence. Now a moment's reflection will make it clear that no intermediate intelligence can ever be a mediator between God and man. The intelligence which would mediate between God and man must partake the nature of both. An intermediate intelligence would be one which was neither human nor divine; the intelligence desiderated is one which shall be both human and divine. A being who is neither human nor divine—an archangel or seraph, for instance—is himself as much in need of a mediator as is the human soul for which he professes to mediate; his nature is different from that of God, his nature is equally different from that of man. What is wanted is a being whose nature shall join the extremes, who shall unite in his own person those two elements of the human and the divine which apart from his person exist in intellectual isolation and in moral opposition. Without such an event as this, mediation is an impossibility, which is only in other words to say that without Christianity mediation is an impossibility. We may deny that the Christian mediation has ever been accomplished,

Digitized by Google

but we are forced to admit that if this has never been accomplished, no other can. In this region it is emphatically true that 'other foundation can no man lay.' If the medium of union between God and man contain not within itself the germs at once of the divine and of the human, it will never touch the objects which it proposes to bind into unity; it will leave the distance between them as wide and as impassable as ever.

The second effort of the ancient world to restore the communication between the soul and God is sacrifice. Sacrifice is a more important attempt than mediation. Mediation is only a *general* characteristic of heathen religions; sacrifice seems inseparable from the very idea of heathen religion. Mediation has often its origin in a purely intellectual need; sacrifice is essentially the fruit of a moral want in the soul. It is the effort of man's moral nature to build a tower which shall reach unto heaven, in order that its separation from God may on one side at least be covered. The idea of sacrifice unites the Gentile with the Jew; it is an element as universal as the religious consciousness itself. We shall endeavour, in our review of this element, to consider it simply in those aspects in which it *does* unite the Gentile with the Jew. We shall avoid all questions peculiar to Jewish sacrifices, shall take no note of typology, shall attempt no discussion of the Messianic import which is supposed to underlie the Mosaic symbolism. Our

Digitized by Google

object in these lectures is to find the relation between the natural and the revealed, and we are not at liberty to take for granted that Judaism belongs purely to the natural. It is in Judaism undoubtedly that sacrifice assumes its most prominent and its most developed aspect, but we must consider the phenomenon in those points in which it is common to Judaism with other religions. Looked at from this cosmopolitan standpoint, it will be found that the idea of sacrifice has expressed itself in three different manifestations, which may be respectively indicated by the terms thanksgiving, propitiation, and expiation.

In the absence of any authentic source of information as to the historical evolution of the idea of sacrifice, we are thrown very much back, in our efforts to trace it, upon the natural intuitions of the human mind. Under these circumstances it would be folly to dogmatize; we can only view the matter from the side of probabilities. Considered, however, from this side, we should say that the idea of sacrifice would be developed in the human mind in the order which we have here indicated; and we shall proceed as briefly as possible to enumerate the steps by which, in our view, that order was evolved. Man's earliest consciousness was, as we have seen, the sense of dependence. His first perception of himself was the perception of his own nothingness. He looked up to these mighty forces of nature, which to him were the highest symbols of the divine, and he felt how small,

Digitized by Google

how insignificant, how mean in comparison was the tiny force of his own personal life. What was this amid the gigantic movements of the material universe? it was but a still small voice, lost in the thunder, the earthquake, and the fire. To man thus meditating, the marvellous thought became the knowledge that, small and insignificant as was his personal life, it was yet suffered to exist. The forces of the material universe did not crush it; they passed by on the other side, and suffered it to live through its little day. Was not this a subject for gratitude? Was it not kind in these mighty forces to suffer the existence of a life which had not an element of strength in common with their own? and if so, was it not fitting that such kindness should be acknowledged? Ought not the powers of nature to be thanked for their forbearance in sparing man? Man thought so, and he proceeded to act upon the thought. He tried to express his thankfulness by offering something to the powers, by giving up something of his own to make them richer; that instinct was the birth of sacrifice. It had its natural root in the sense of dependence, and in the gratitude awakened by the thought that man in spite of his insignificance was yet allowed to be. It does not seem to us that the consciousness of sin was necessary to the birth of sacrifice. Man is a finite being as well as a sinful being; his helplessness lies as much in his finitude as in his sinfulness, and he must learn his finitude sooner than his sinfulness.

Digitized by Google

What more natural than that, ere ever there should have opened within him the sense of his own depravity, he should have striven to express his sense of that infinite goodness which had prevented his finite feebleness from being utterly extinguished in death?

But it was not possible that man's consciousness could be arrested here. It was inevitable that in process of time there should awake within him a deeper moral knowledge than that of dependence on God,—a sense of separation from God, a consciousness of sin. It is not to be supposed, however, that this consciousness of sin would spring up at once into its highest development. Man's first perception of a disturbance in his moral nature would be the feeling not of having broken a divine law, but of having inflicted a private injury on the divine Being, or on those divine powers which in his view ruled the universe. He would become conscious of having done something which was an act of disobedience to those mighty forces of nature on which he was dependent; he would feel that he had insulted the gods, and that the gods must be actuated towards him by motives of private resentment. How was their vengeance to be averted? how was he to escape the consequences of their anger? He must do something to appease that anger. He must give something to the gods as a mollifying gift to avert the threatened displeasure and ward off the coming blow

Digitized by Google

Here in the heathen world is the origin of the second form of sacrifice; thanksgiving has been followed by propitiation. Man has not yet learned the horror of sin, but he has learned the danger of offending a sovereign power, and he has found the need of receiving forgiveness from that power. He cries out for the remission of the penalty, he offers his sacrifice in deprecation of the coming wrath. His highest conception of pardon soars not as yet beyond the escape from punishment. He asks no other forgiveness than the passing by of the vengeance, desires no other reconciliation than the refraining of the divine hand to strike him down. This is all for which his sacrifice pleads; it aims at propitiating the offended; and when it has averted the vindictive blow, it has reached its goal.

We advance a little further up the hill of moral development, and this crude conception begins to fade. It fades into something higher and purer; the desire for propitiation gives place to the desire for expiation, which includes the former and a great deal more. There dawns upon the heart of man the conviction that sin is something deeper than an insult to a private individual; nay, that God Himself is something deeper than a private individual; that He is not simply a person, but a character,—not merely a king, but a lawgiver. The moment that conviction dawns, there breaks upon the mind the moral consciousness that no private forgiveness would suffice

Digitized by Google

for the soul of man. Man awakens to the knowledge that the outward penalty is only the surface of his trouble, that the remission of the outward penalty would leave the depth of his unrest unstilled. He finds for the first time that what he wants is not simply forgiveness, but reconciliation; not merely the remission of a penalty, but a removal of the liability to penalty,—in other words, of guilt. The high-souled child which is conscious of having offended an earthly parent, will not be satisfied with being told that no punishment will be exacted; it feels within itself the liability to punishment,—the guilt, the sense of having done something wrong. It wants, not remission of penalty, at least not primarily; what it wants primarily is the remission of the guilt which ought to bring penalty. It desires nothing less, and it will be content with nothing less, than absolute restoration to the heart of its parent. It asks the crucifixion of the moral past, the blotting out from the memory of its parent of that particular deed which has produced the estrangement. There are certain moments when the man experiences towards Heaven what the child feels towards earthly relationships. Let us conceive a possible case. You have, we shall say, culpably taken away the life of a fellow-creature, and your soul is filled with remorse. What would at such a moment be your notion of restored comfort? Would it satisfy you to know that God would remit your punishment? Assuredly not; that would be simply

Digitized by Google

the forgiveness of a private individual. It would not readjust the violated law, it would not bring back the man you had slain, it would not restore joy to the countenances of the bereaved. What you want at such a time is not propitiation, but that which includes and transcends it,—expiation. You want a crucifixion of the moral past. You ask to be put in the position which you occupied before the deed, to be able to feel that the deed was never done by you, that your hands are free from it, that your heart is pure from it, that your life is untouched by it; this, and nothing less than this, will pacify your wounded conscience.

Now, remember that in a conscience keenly quickened the contemplation of sin in the abstract will produce as profound an unrest as the contemplation of a deed of murder produces in a conscience not quickened beyond its natural limits. Keeping this fact in view, you shall have found the key to the origin of expiatory sacrifice. Men begin to offer sacrifices of expiation when they want to blot out, not merely the consequence of their transgression, but their transgression itself; when they desire not simply to be outwardly forgiven, but to be inwardly reconciled; when they wish not only to escape the punishment they deserve, but to be liberated from the misery of deserving it. The sacrifice whose object is expiation differs from the sacrifice whose object is propitiation in this, that its primary aim is not the provision

Digitized by Google

for the future, but the crucifixion of the moral past. Judaism on its very threshold exalts the sacrifice of expiation over the sacrifice of propitiation. Looking at the narrative of Cain and Abel simply as a narrative, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that in the mind of the narrator at least the sacrifice which contemplated the crucifixion of the past was a higher and nobler kind of offering than the sacrifice which contemplated merely the smoothing of future consequences. Judaism throughout its long history held fast by this distinction and by this preference. As has been justly remarked by Mr. Dale of Birmingham in the fifth of his admirable lectures on the Atonement, it sought in its sacrifices not to propitiate God, but to make propitiation *to* God,—a difference of expression which clearly marks the boundary line between propitiation and expiation. The sacrifices of Judaism contemplated mainly not the restoration of the soul to God's favour, but the restitution by the soul of that which the soul had unjustly taken away. It aimed at giving to the divine an equivalent for that of which it had been deprived by the human; and its object in that aim was to undo the past, to blot out not merely the memory, but the fact of separation from the divine, and to be again with God as if there never had been a moment of severance.

And it is equally clear that the attempt failed. To the fact of its failure we have the testimony of

Digitized by Google

Judaism itself, given at the end of its career, and after it had exhausted every possible effort. The writer to the Hebrews expressly declares that the Jewish attempts at sacrificial expiation could not purify in things *pertaining to the conscience.* What he means to say is simply this,—they could not blot out the past. They could obviate civil penalties, they could restore a man to his position with his fellow-men, they could render it possible for him to retain his membership in a visible theocracy; but they could not obliterate the deeds of yesterday. No human mode of punishment, no human mode of sacrifice, no human mode of restoration, can do this. Even if a murderer could bring back his victim from the grave, it would not obliterate his deed, it would not destroy his liability to punishment. To destroy that liability you must destroy the past; the consciousness of the past is the handwriting which remains against every man, and in the view of this handwriting can no man living be justified. Is there any conceivable method by which a man could escape the testimony of the past? There is one, and one only. If a man were to become what Paul calls a new creature,[1] by having his life taken up into a larger life, a purer life, a diviner life, then, even on natural principles, Paul is quite right in saying that old things would pass away, and that all things would become new. In this case the larger life would

[1] See Appendix, Note 14.

Digitized by Google

inevitably appropriate your smaller one, would cease to distinguish between your possessions and its own, would claim your past as its past. But observe carefully how much that would involve on the part of the large, divine life; it could not crucify your past without your past crucifying it. When the fresh waters of the river run into the salt sea, the sea appropriates the river, but it can only appropriate it by washing away its corruptions, and it can only wash them away by taking them on itself. Even so, if a divine life would enfold my personality, it must enfold all that my personality contains,—my disorder, my liability to divine enmity, my penalty of death. It must take up the impurity of my nature into its own pure nature, it must bear my sin and all that is involved in my sin, it must become partaker of my actual human experience. The supposition at whose threshold we have arrived will be seen to enfold not only a mighty mystery, but a mighty sacrifice,—a sacrifice in comparison with which all the propitiatory offerings of heathendom and all the expiatory offerings of Judaism fade into insignificance. It will be seen to imply nothing less than the great and fathomless doctrine expressed in these pregnant words: 'He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin.'[1]

It is here that Christianity steps upon the scene. It says to the world, Such is the sacrifice which I offer

[1] Remember we are here considering not what God requires, but simply what man needs,—redemption's *human* ground.

Digitized by Google

you. I offer to every man who will receive it the membership in a new body, and the head of that body shall be divine. To Him you can bring what the river brings to the sea—all the corruption which your life has gathered. The head will bear the sins of the members, even though in bearing them away He must suffer that penalty which is the consequence of contact with them. Give Him your past, and He will give you His past, His present, and His future. Give Him your corruption, and even while it bears Him down to death, there will issue from His divine headship a stream of incorruptible life which shall make you incorruptible. His death shall be your quickening, His cross shall be your crown, His wounds shall be your healing, His poverty shall be your riches. He will give you His beauty in exchange for your ashes, His joy in exchange for your mourning, His garment of praise in exchange for your heaviness. He will take your earthliness, and you will receive His heaven. On the bosom of the divine life your past shall be cancelled, and you shall be free, free to begin again with the standing of a little child, without a retrospective experience of guilt to impede your fresh chance of a bright future.

But you say, All this is a great mystery. Undoubtedly; but wherein consists the mystery? This is a point on which we are liable to fall into much confusion. The doctrine of atonement is universally and rightly regarded as involving something which

Digitized by Google

transcends the human faculties; but what is that something? Is it the fact that men are sinners? that is pre-eminently a fact of nature, and it would be impossible to deny it. Is it the fact that sin involves certain penalties? we see this exemplified in the life of every day. Is it the statement that Christ has borne the sin of the world with the penalties which accompany it? even this is not a mystery, if we assume something behind it. Assume that Christ is the head of humanity, and the sin-bearing becomes a necessity. The headship of Christ is the real mystery; its mystery lies in the process by which it is accomplished—a process unseen by man, and therefore incapable of representation to human experience. But let that process once be conceded, let the headship of Christ over humanity be once admitted, and the doctrine of atonement, so far from being supernatural, shall become the natural and the inevitable consequence. Let us remember what it is to be the head of an organism; as we said in the previous lecture, it is to take whatever belongs to the members of the body. Christ cannot become the head of humanity without becoming the head of a body of sin and death; it would be a contradiction in terms to be the one without being the other. The moment we have given our assent to the doctrine of the mystical union, we have given our assent to the doctrine that a pure head has been attached to an impure body. When we have reached this stage all

Digitized by Google

mystery ceases. We can understand in kind though not in degree the sufferings of the Son of man. We can understand how, in bearing the impurities of humanity, the divine head of the human organism was bowed by anguish to the dust of death.[1] We can understand the agony and bloody sweat of the garden, when He cried, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' We can understand even how, in the intensity of that union which subsisted between the head and the members, He should have been compelled to feel the hiding of a Father's face, and to express His sense of separation in the bitter cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' All this in the light of the divine headship over humanity becomes clear. It is now, too, that we understand the meaning of that expression, which Christianity appropriates to itself, and which outside of Christianity is a paradox,—'a royal priesthood.' Christianity alone could claim such a designation. In all other religions the office of the priest was distinct from the office of the king, even where these were vested in the same person. Sacrifice was the antithesis of royalty; the one was the type of humiliation, the other was the mark of greatness. But here, in this headship of Christ, the humility was the greatness, and the greatness was the humility. He was king over humanity, just because He bore the sins of humanity; He was never so crowned as when

[1] Not by the mere pain of the physical cross.

Digitized by Google

He wore the crown of thorns. For the first time the world had reached the thought of a divine sacrifice, which is only another form of a royal priesthood. Hitherto sacrifice had been purely human; it had expressed only the human soul's sense of the distance between itself and the divine. Here was a divine sacrifice, and a sacrifice which was founded not on the distance, but on the nearness of the divine to the human. It had its origin in the fact that God had come so close to humanity as to make the experience of humanity His own experience, had entered into so intimate a union with the sons of men, that the moral burdens of the race became potentially His burdens. The divinity of sacrifice was a new thought in the world, and a thought which has perhaps gone further than any other to make the world itself new. It is to this more than to any other conception that we are to ascribe the change in the human ideal of greatness, the transition from the worship of material force to the reverence of patience, meekness, and charity. If we would ask why it is that the virtues which the ancient world considered unmanly have become to the modern world the noblest of all, we shall find an adequate answer in the apotheosis of sacrifice, the lifting of the sacrificial rite from the sphere of the human into the atmosphere of the divine. The moment you make sacrifice an attribute of God, you make it a thing which ennobles man, and which it is godlike in man to manifest. The doctrine

Digitized by Google

of divine sacrifice has, even from the most secular point of view and on the most secular principle of interpretation, realized in history the meaning of the words, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' The majority of the human race are doubtless still far enough from the practice of this life, but it may be doubted if any son of humanity will now venture to withhold his assent to its inherent power and grandeur. It is universally admitted that the life of sacrifice, wherever it is seen, is ennobling to him who lives it, and worthy of all reverence from mankind. Yet let us not forget that this sentiment, familiar as it has become to the Christian consciousness, is itself almost exclusively the product of that consciousness. We shall look in vain for anything exactly resembling it in the practice of pre-Christian antiquity, because we shall look in vain for anything exactly parallel to it in those religious creeds which are the source of ancient practice. If the spirit of sacrifice has become to the modern world an object of permanent desire, if those who possess this spirit are regarded no longer as the special sinners of humanity, but as those who have begun to be emancipated from the power of sin, it is only because the religious belief of Christendom has enthroned at the heart of the universe a being whose headship over humanity is reached by bearing the sins and carrying the sorrows of the human organism. It is because the Son of God is held to be the sacrifice for the world,

Digitized by Google

that the world holds the life of sacrifice to be the avenue to the divine.

And since we have here broached the subject of Christian morality, this may be, perhaps, the fitting place to make our transition to the final point of inquiry with which the present question is concerned: What is the connection between this mystery of atonement and that other great mystery,—the doctrine of regeneration? Is there any natural bond of union between them? If there be, we may be sure that in finding it we shall have found the link which connects religious belief with religious practice. Now it seems to us that in the New Testament system, and especially in the Pauline form of thought, the doctrine of regeneration grows directly and necessarily out of the royal priesthood, in other words, out of Christ's potential headship over humanity. It will be remembered how we pointed out in the preceding lecture, that in the relation of every head to every body there are two distinct movements. By one of these movements the head receives its impressions from the members, by the other the members receive an influx of life from the head. It is impossible that there can exist any organic relation in which these two conditions are not both fulfilled. If we admit an organic union between Christ and the Church, we shall be constrained to recognise in that union the presence of each of these processes. On the one hand, we shall have to assign to the head the

Digitized by Google

power of sacrifice, in other words, the power of bearing the sins and sorrows of the members; this side of the union we have already been considering. But, on the other hand, we shall be forced to recognise what the members receive as well as what they give, what the head communicates as well as what it bears. The members give up their old life only that they may obtain a new one; they are emptied in order that they may be replenished. Hence it is inevitable that the work of the Spirit must begin just where the work of the Cross is completed. The divine life which bears the sin of the world must in the very act of bearing it fill up the blank it has created.

What, then, is the first experience of this divine life in the soul? It is uniformly represented as a state of struggle; we might add, it has been uniformly felt to be so. If there ever was a man who was partaker of this life, it was Paul. From the moment when his old nature was struck to the dust, until the hour when he yielded up his life in martyrdom, his spiritual history might be epitomized in his own brief but comprehensive testimony, 'I die daily'; the spirit of sacrifice had become the law of his being. And yet it is not less true, that from the moment when Saul of Tarsus was transformed into Paul the apostle, a life of self-conscious rectitude was transformed into a life conscious only of its own abasement. Saul of Tarsus felt no struggle; the spiritual being of Paul the apostle was a struggle from beginning to end. It is after his con-

Digitized by Google

version that we hear of his inward conflicts, of the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, of the mutual antagonism between his flesh and his spirit, of the body of sin and death from which he longs to be delivered. Is there any rational mode of accounting for such an experience? Is it necessary to view it as a paradox? Looked at from the outside, considered from a purely worldly standpoint, it cannot be otherwise than paradoxical; but within the circle of Christian thought itself, it is not only a natural but an inevitable thing. What explanation would Paul have given of his own inward struggle? He would have said it was the only thing which could be reasonably looked for. He would have pointed to the fact that the ravages of a disease are only felt when the convalescent life comes; nay, he has expressed the same thought in a yet stronger figure. He declares that the members of Christ's body, like the members of a physical body, are in a state of death when separated from the membership. He says that the human soul before it enters into this membership is destitute of spiritual life, and therefore destitute of the power to detect even its own deadness. It only learns the nature of that death in which it has been lying, when it is quickened by the pulsations of the new divine life which flows from the new head of humanity, from the royal priesthood of the Son of man. The birth of its divine life is and must be a moment of awakening, and therefore a moment of pain. The quickening

Digitized by Google

into fresh vitality is a quickening into keener consciousness. The eye is strengthened to detect the presence of impurities, the ear is sharpened to discover the absence of harmonies, the conscience is refined to mark the magnitude of offences. Man learns his old self when he gets a new self, reaches the vision of his darkness in the first blaze of his spiritual light, and finds the meaning and the horror of death in the moment when his being is quickened into life eternal.

Perhaps it may be thought that in these remarks we have somewhat transcended our province. It may be thought that we have left the scientific ground of the lecturer for the emotional ground of the preacher. In reality it is not so. The experience of an inward spiritual struggle is indeed an emotional experience, but it is a fact, and therefore an object for the investigation of theological science. The experiences of the individual mind belong as much to the sphere of the man of science as any phenomenon of nature, or any event of history; they are themselves phenomena of nature, they are themselves events of history. The most rigid positivism can no more disregard the religious impressions of the individual soul, than it can disregard the revolutions of day and night, or the motions of the planetary bodies. It may deny that they have any objective validity, it may refuse to accept their testimony as it refuses on many points to accept the testimony of the senses, but it cannot deny that whether true or false their

Digitized by Google

testimony is given. The quickened sense of sin which a spiritual man experiences is in itself a sober historical fact, and, like the other facts of this universe, it waits to receive its explanation from the researches of the man of science. If this would be a sphere of universal law, there must be found in its universality a place for this religious phenomenon; it can never be unscientific or sentimental to attempt the discovery of the law of spiritual sentiment. We have dwelt less upon the subject than its interest and its importance demanded, but we have been guided in this, not by the fear lest individual conviction should be an unscientific theme, but by the fact that the experience to which it points is limited in its operation. All men can study religion as it is manifested on the page of history; only spiritualized men can study religion as it is manifested in the individual soul. We have therefore endeavoured to confine our range as much as possible to the visible rather than to the invisible facts, in order that we might base the science of Christianity upon principles which should be universally recognised. The volume of past history is an open book, which he who runneth may read; and men can register the experiences of others long before they have learned to analyse their own. It is on this account, and on this account alone, that we have looked at the laws of religious life rather in their national than in their individual manifestation; to this point of historical observation we shall return in the next lecture.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE V.

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.

WE have now arrived at what may be called distinctively the Christian conception of God, —the conception of a royal priesthood, or, in other words, of an omnipotent love. The God of Christianity is essentially a love which can do all things, which has infinite power to help, and infinite power to bear. This royal priesthood constitutes the holiness of God. The divine holiness in the Christian system is not one of His attributes,—it is Himself, His being, His personality, the source of all His attributes. In reaching this definition of God, Christianity has, as we have seen, entered into no antagonism with the natural instincts of the religious life. We have found that the Christian conception has answered the problems of the light of nature, and that, even in transcending the limits of pre-Christian systems, it has offered to those systems a common meeting-place in itself. The light of Christianity has not destroyed the light of nature; it has simply absorbed it. Nevertheless, now that we have reached the Christian

Digitized by Google

conception, we must allow it to reign, not only paramount, but alone. We can no longer have a God of nature side by side with the God of Christianity; the God of Christianity must be our God of nature too. It is inevitable, therefore, that in this process of absorption something should be eliminated from our old conception of God. We have seen that Christianity has answered the religious needs of man; but there is a question which remains, now that we have reached Christianity, To what extent does the light of the new religion modify our old views of the God of nature? The greater includes the less; but before including it, it must eliminate those elements which, by reason of their excessive individualism, tend to prevent incorporation. What elements has the Christian thought of God refused to borrow from the light of nature?

Natural theology is popularly supposed to involve three subjects of study,—the attributes of God, the government of God, and the immortality of the soul. We propose to consider to what extent each of these has been affected by the advent of the Christian conception; in the present lecture we shall take up the first two, and reserve for the succeeding lecture the subject of immortality.

The three attributes of God, which are generally regarded as pre-eminently natural, or cognisable by the light of reason, are those of infinitude, eternity, and immutability. Now, each of these so-called natural

Digitized by Google

attributes has been subjected by Christianity to a modifying process. Let us begin with the divine attribute of infinitude. That God is infinite is a truth of natural reason, a doctrine which comes from the light of nature. But the question arises, What meaning does the light of nature attach to the word infinite? The question can only be answered by history, by a reference to the life of the world which preceded the advent of Christianity. When we have learned what the pre-Christian ages thought of God's infinitude, we shall be in a position to judge to what extent the Christian conception is a transcript of the light of nature. Now it will be found that when the pre-Christian world used the term infinite, it meant one or other of two things,—either the negation of the finite, or the boundless multiplication of the finite. The philosophical minds generally took the former view. They understood by infinite that which was opposite to the finite, and which excluded all finite qualities. They declared that every finite quality was a limit. When you say a man is good you give him a finite quality, because you assign him an attribute which separates him from some other man. But an infinite being cannot be separated from anything: every separation involves a boundary, and every boundary is a limit, and every limit is an imperfection. Accordingly the ancient philosophers said, You must not say that God is good, that God is great, that God is holy. In so saying you are lower-

Digitized by Google

ing God; you are giving Him the very qualities which distinguish one being from another, and which therefore shut out one being from the sphere of another. Your God must be shut out from nothing. He must include all beings and all things, and in order to do this He must have no distinguishing, no separating qualities of His own; He must be infinite in the sense of being non-finite. Such is the view of infinitude which was adopted by the philosophers of the ancient world, which prevails in the later or Vedantic form of Brahminism, and in the theories of the Eleatic school of Greece. We need not say that in such a view there is no place for a union between the infinite and the finite; heaven and earth are eternally separated, God remains for ever the opposite of man. The infinite God of ancient philosophy cannot exist along with the finite; wherever He enters, the finite flees before Him, or rather is extinguished in the brightness of His glory. The creature loses his creature-life, the individual surrenders his individuality, man gives up his humanity in the presence of the divine. Creature-life, individuality, and humanity are all the opposites of the infinite, because they all imply the possession of those qualities which distinguish one from another. It is necessary, therefore, that they should die; the separate drops must lose their separateness in that great ocean of divinity where all distinctions cease, and where all lives are one.

Digitized by Google

It is clear that, if this be the only natural view of the subject, nature could have no place for Christianity. Christianity implies as its foundation the possibility of a union between the infinite and the finite,—a union in which both shall be one, while yet neither shall be destroyed. But there is another form in which the idea of infinitude was held by the ancient world; it was looked at by many, not as the negation of finite forms, but as the boundless multiplication of them. A mile is a finite space; conceive the mile infinitely repeated in every possible spatial direction, and you will describe the idea of infinite space. On this view of material boundlessness the popular mind of the ancient world eagerly fastened; it seemed the fitting symbol for the representation of God's infinitude. The misfortune was that the symbol was never reached, in the nature of things never could be reached. You cannot represent infinite space even to your imagination. Whatever you represent to your imagination must have a figure, but whatever has a figure must be finite. Everything which has a shape is by that shape marked off, distinguished, divided from other things, and in the very act of being divided from them there is a limit imposed to its sphere of being; its figure is in fact a boundary-line which says, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.' The moment you try to represent infinite space, you are really making an effort to destroy the idea. Here, again, it is clear that the light of nature could not

Digitized by Google

reach the union of the finite and the infinite. If the infinite God be simply a being who is materially boundless, I can only be united with Him by ceasing myself to be, for as long as I remain I am a barrier to His boundlessness; in the very act of thinking of Him I limit Him. If this God would be all in all, I must cease to see myself as different from Him; I must become dead to self-consciousness, to all individual consciousness; I must myself become an atom of the spatial infinite.

In each of these natural representations Christianity fails to find a meeting-place. There is no possibility afforded by either of them for a union between God and man. But have we exhausted the resources of the light of nature? Is there no element which nature has itself neglected, and which awaits its revelation by another light? Yes, there is such an element. There is a third conceivable view of the infinite, natural yet neglected by nature; it may be regarded not as the negation of the finite, nor yet as the material multiplication of the finite, but as the spiritual intensifying of the finite. Love, says the ancient philosophy, is a finite quality; yes, says Christianity, but it may be made an infinite quality.[1] Christianity has come to tell the soul that there is a spiritual as well as a material boundlessness. Material boundlessness is the power at one and the same

[1] Hegel makes the essence of all thought the finding of self in another.

Digitized by Google

moment to occupy infinite space, but there may be a spiritual boundlessness within the most limited sphere of space. Christianity declares that God is a spirit. The infinitude of God must therefore be the infinitude of a spirit, not of a mere extended substance. An infinite spirit is a being who has infinite spirituality, or, in other words, who possesses in the most intense possible degree the attributes and qualities essential to a mind. But it is clearly conceivable that all this might be reached within the limits of a finite human form. There is no contradiction in the conception of an infinite spirit being lodged in a frail tabernacle of clay, dwelling with the sons of men, submitting to the restraints and the limitations of humanity. No straitened outward circumstances can impose any barrier to such infinitude as this; nay, it has been borne out by experience, that a man's spiritual power is often called into fuller play by the outward depression of his life. The most intense spiritual lives have not unfrequently been those which were not cast in pleasant places, whose inward power has been evoked by outward feebleness, and whose greatness of soul has been elicited by physical adversity; in cases such as these the external limits have contributed to foster the spiritual boundlessness. It is on this phase of humanity that Christianity has fastened. It has proclaimed the possibility of a union between the finite and the infinite; it has done more, it has professed to illustrate that union.

Digitized by Google

It has exhibited to the eye of the world the vision of a boundless soul,—a soul whose boundlessness consists not in its freedom from material limitations, but in its power to endure these limitations, and to endure them unsullied to the end. It shows us a Man of sorrows, afflicted, poor, despised and rejected of men, having not where to lay His head, dwelling amidst obscure conditions, and surrounded by the most adverse circumstances, yet in the very midst of these experiences speaking as never man spake, thinking as never man thought, living as never man lived, and dying as never man died. It shows us a boundless purity called out by a world's impurity, a perfect love elicited by a world's lovelessness, an absolute self-sacrifice evoked by the vision of that selfishness which is the essence of human sin. It asks us to contemplate Him as perfect *through* sufferings, as reaching His crown by the very act of bearing His cross, as attaining his resurrection glory by the experience of death. In this combination of opposites, Christianity has reconciled those things which were deemed irreconcilable. It has revealed the infinite in union with the finite. It has taught us that divine strength may be found in human weakness. It has shown us, above all, that the noblest symbol of God's infinitude is not the canopy of the starry heavens, but the unfathomable possibilities of a human soul.

The second of the divine attributes commonly

Digitized by Google

claimed as natural is that of eternity. Here, too, the light of nature led the ancient world to form two opposite conceptions. To the popular mind the eternity of God meant His endless duration, His endurance throughout all ages. Now it is true we cannot separate from a divine being the idea of an endless duration; a God who at any time shall cease to be, is a contradiction in terms. But this endless duration is not a divine attribute; it is simply a historical fact. When we speak of an attribute, we mean a power, capacity, or susceptibility. When we speak of God's eternity as an attribute, we must mean not the fact of His endless duration, but the principle which causes that fact to be; the fountain of God's eternity must lie not in the future, but in the present. Accordingly the philosophic minds of the old world sought a precisely opposite definition of the eternity of God. Instead of making it synonymous with endless duration, they strove to eliminate from it the very idea of time. The eternity of God they said meant the timelessness of God; it signified that the divine life had no relation whatever to the ideas of past, present, and future; that it dwelt in a region from which all temporal conceptions must be excluded. We know what a strong hold this view obtained even on the Christian Church through its contact with Neo-Platonism; it fascinated the mind of Augustine, it still fascinates the minds of most philosophical divines. It seems to us, however,

Digitized by Google

that this view has the same objection from a Christian standpoint as we found in the Vedantic notion of infinitude. A God who is essentially timeless can never really be manifested in time, nay, can never essentially be manifested at all; manifestation is in its nature a temporal act. If we would preserve as a possible conception the union of the finite and the infinite, we must seek for a definition of God's eternity which shall be intermediate between the two extremes, which shall neither make it identical with duration on the one hand, nor synonymous with timelessness on the other.

And here, again, let us ask if there is not an element in the case which the light of nature has left neglected? Is there any element in the idea of time to which man habitually gives no prominence? There is, and that is the life of the present. Man never lives in the present; his being is divided between the past and the future, between the experience of retrospect and the experience of prospect. He has practically never realized the meaning of the Now. Yet this neglected point in the conception of time is precisely that point on which Christianity has based its view of the divine eternity. The eternity of God in the Christian system is that principle of immortal youth which makes his being an everlasting Now. It is not that the idea of time is excluded, but that the element of succession is excluded; the events of the world are beheld in the

Digitized by Google

light of a perpetual present, the yesterday and the to-morrow are parts of the to-day. Before Abraham was, I *am*, expresses in a sentence the Christian conception of the divine eternity. It is the eternity of a perpetual abiding love, which holds all things in its own abidingness, to whose keen power of realization the past is present and the future already come, which sees in reality what the poet sees in imagination,—the end in the beginning, and the beginning in the end. Christianity might apply to the eternity of God those words which it applies to the salvation of the soul, 'Now is the accepted time.'

The third of these divine attributes which the unaided light of nature has professed to reach, is that of immutability. Upon the subject of the changelessness of God we find the judgment of antiquity uttering two opposing voices. To the popular mind, to those worshippers who had not yet transcended the stages of mythology, the changelessness of God was almost lost sight of. The gods were more than usually capricious men—fickle in attachments, shifting in purposes, wavering in resolves. The notion of a divine moral plan to which all the acts of their deities must be conformed, was foreign to the phases of ancient mythology. The attribute which above all others they ignored, was the attribute of immutability. And yet it is worth noting that even the popular mind of antiquity was unable altogether to ignore it; it was forced in spite of

Digitized by Google

itself to see in the manifestations of this universe something more than a series of unconnected apparitions, to feel that behind the phenomenal there must be something which was permanent, and that beneath the shifting appearance there must be an abiding law. The popular mind was constrained to account for this impression, and in order to account for it, it conceived the existence of a power behind the gods which it called Fate,—a power blind in its working, and unintelligent in its action, yet decreeing all things from the beginning, and inexorably changeless in the execution of those decrees. In this conception of Fate even the mythological worshipper acknowledged that there lay in this world an attribute of immutability, though to him it was rather a fear than a joy; he could not worship it, but he made it the power which controlled even the objects of his worship. Yet this same thought of immutability, which to the popular mind of antiquity was a fear, became to its philosophic mind a source of unfeigned delight. Ancient philosophy fixed with peculiar veneration on the idea of a changeless God. It went over to the opposite extreme from the worshippers of the eastern and western mythologies; these had made their divine being too fickle, this made Him too soulless. In its reverence for the divine immutability, the philosophy of the old world forgot the beauty of spontaneity. It lost sight of the fact that changeless unity is only one law of the universe, and that to

Digitized by Google

render that law beautiful, it must be co-ordinated with a principle of perpetual and infinite variety. In forgetting this fact, it came to worship that which was beneath worship,—a cold, impassive, passionless power, whose chief glory consisted in its inability to be moved, whose majesty was its unvaried sameness, whose divinity was its capacity to be unaffected by the pulsations of time. The state-religion of the Chinese Confucius was actually based on this conception, as was also the Brahminical contempt for all the objects of finite contemplation. It pervaded the very essence of the Platonic philosophy, it lay beneath the rigidness of the Stoic morality, it affected more or less every developed system of ancient faith. Yet it is clear that such a view of God's immutability must debar Him from all union with the mutable, in other words, from all union with the finite; such a God could only unite with the finite by destroying everything in it which constituted its separate existence. Christianity is based upon the possibility of a real union between the human and the divine, —a union in which the divine shall not be lost in the human, and in which the human shall not be swallowed up in the divine. Accordingly, Christianity cannot accept this definition of a changeless God, any more than it can accept the mythological notion of a God who is in perpetual change. It wants some element which will unite what is good in both, and reject what is pernicious in each; it

Digitized by Google

must retain the spontaneity on the one hand, and must keep unimpaired the changelessness on the other. Its God must not be fickle,—He must be an abiding principle; but neither must its God be passionless,—it comes expressly to reveal the doctrine of a divine passion. Between these extremes Christianity has steered. It has given to the world a conception of divine immutability which is not only consistent with an infinite variation in divine action, but which may even be said to involve such a variation. The immutability which Christianity emphasizes, is the changelessness of love; and a changeless love, when exhibited towards a changeful object, must be able to adapt itself to that object by an infinite variety of acts, and an infinite selection of ways. Christian immutability is not the changelessness of action, but the changelessness of principle. It is the power of divine love to remain stedfastly fixed on its object, even while its object is perpetually shifting its position; to follow it in its wanderings, to adapt itself to its every change of situation, to meet it in all the varieties of its intensely varied circumstances. If divine love would be immutable in principle, it must be constantly changing in manifestation. The line of treatment which is demanded by the child will no longer suit the man; the one purpose which enfolds both, can only retain its unity by altering the form of its action.

And here, perhaps, is the fitting place to make our

Digitized by Google

transition from the divine attributes to the divine government. If the immutability of God consists in a changelessness of purpose, it becomes natural to inquire, What is the purpose? It is only another form of asking on what plan God has constructed this universe. We look at the matter here from a purely comparative point of view. We have seen how Christianity has modified the conclusions of natural theology in relation to the divine attributes; we have now to see how Christianity has modified the conclusions of natural theology in relation to the divine government or plan of God's providence. The first question which here presents itself is the most general one,—Is this world good or bad? Is creation a scene of happiness, or a scene of misery?—a path of sunshine, or a vale of tears? These are the two extremes of the question between the optimist and the pessimist. There are clearly intermediate views possible; but in the ancient world it does not seem as if any intermediate view was entertained. If we study the life of heathendom, that is to say, the light of unaided nature, we shall be struck with the fact that men for the most part looked at this world as a scene either of irretrievable darkness or of unclouded brightness. Throughout the systems of ancient philosophy, it must be confessed that in general the dark view predominated. The Buddhist, as we have seen, was so impressed with the vanity and nothingness of life, that he regarded the most fortunate hour of every

Digitized by Google

man to be the hour of his death. It was in perfect consistency with such a view that the Buddhist refused to recognise in this universe the presence of a supreme intelligent providence. The philosophic Brahmin looked upon the world with an eye of equal sadness, though he shrank from drawing so atheistic a conclusion. The Parsee beheld in this seeming unity of the visible world the presence of two opposing kingdoms,—the one of cloudless glory, the other of blackest gloom; but as the Parsee hoped for the victory of the former, he is perhaps an exception to the tendency of ancient philosophy. The Platonist, on the whole, in so far as this earth is concerned, must be regarded as a pessimist; he looked upon finite forms as the hindrance to infinite ideas, and held the presence of matter to be adverse to the power of spirit. The Stoic counselled men to keep their feelings in abeyance; but such a counsel could only have proceeded from one who believed the pains of life to be more potent than its joys. The Epicurean directed his votaries to close their eyes to care; but men close their eyes to that which they are afraid to face. We are disposed to think, with Pressensé, that Epicureanism was 'despair smiling.' On the whole, the tendency of ancient philosophy points very clearly in the direction that the present state of things is the worst possible world. But when we leave the domain of philosophy for the region of mythology, we are plunged all at once into a pre-

Digitized by Google

cisely opposite atmosphere. When we pass from the speculative spirit of the East to the popular mind of the West, we are confronted by a sudden change of sentiment. The representative of the Western mythology is Greece, and Greece, in the sphere of its mythology, is the antithesis of Brahminism, of Buddhism, even of its own Platonism. The popular Greek mind saw in this universe the very opposite of that which had been seen by the philosophers. To the philosopher the world was a scene of unmitigated sadness; to the worshipper of the Greek mythology it was the habitation of cloudless joy. It was to him the best of possible worlds; his very heaven was an earth in the air. He could conceive nothing higher than the system of things amid which he dwelt, or rather than the *things* amid which he dwelt, for he saw in them and sought in them no system. His optimistic estimate of the world was not founded upon any conviction that beneath its manifestations there was an underlying plan of harmony; it was the manifestations themselves in which the Greek gloried. He did not care to look beneath the appearances of things; it cost too much trouble. He wanted a life of ease, —a life which demanded no self-questionings, and required no effort of thought. He did not wish to search for the laws of this universe; he wished to enjoy the universe itself. He desired to feast his eyes with the glory of the sunshine, to delight his ears with the melody of sweet sounds, to inspire his

Digitized by Google

imagination with the beauty of surrounding forms. His joy in nature was a child's joy,—careless, unreflective, spontaneous, the product of the passing hour. Yet, such as it was, it led him to a glad view of the universe. Philosophy had grown sad by thinking beyond its depth, mythology became joyous by not thinking at all. This creation was to the Greek the highest type of a possible paradise.

Here, then, were two extreme views; the one made this world a mistake, the other made it a heaven. What relation does the Christian conception bear to these? can those who receive that conception adopt either of them? There is one important point in which the Christian estimate of this world is equally opposed to both. For let it be observed that in both of these ancient views there is one common assumption; each of them takes it for granted that the creation is completed. Those who say it is the worst possible world, and those who say it is the best possible world, are alike agreed in this, that it is something whose ideal has been already fulfilled. It is precisely here that Christianity enters into conflict with them, though the field of conflict proves to be a field of reconciliation. Christianity denies that the ideal of this world has been fulfilled. It maintains that its plan is not yet accomplished, but is only passing through a process of accomplishment. 'All things work together for good.' In these striking words Paul declares that the ideal of the world is only being

Digitized by Google

worked out, in other words, that it is undergoing its stages of development, from the lower to the higher, from the less to the more. Paul would deprecate any absolute statement either of optimism or of pessimism. With the pessimist, he would deny that the absolute good has come; with the optimist, he would affirm that creation is the *heir* to absolute good. He would deem it unfair to open the book in the middle, and, after reading a few pages, to pronounce it a tale of sadness; unfair to enter into the theatre when the play is half done, and, after witnessing a few scenes, to call it a tragedy. In his view, this is precisely our position in the world. We begin to read the book of life in the middle, we begin to witness the drama of life when it is already half done. We have never seen the opening, we shall never see the close; all we know is that there is something in progress around us, that we are in the midst of a plot, that we are ourselves the actors in a great plan. Paul looks out upon the world, and he sees in it a world of development; with that vision he is content. He is content to be persuaded that there is in progress a grand scheme of creation, which shall one day satisfy all the hopes of the optimist, and he expresses his undoubted conviction of the fact by making it a matter not simply of faith, but of knowledge: 'We know that all things work for good.'

Yet it is worthy of remark that Paul reaches this prospective optimism by quite a different route from

Digitized by Google

that over which the light of nature had travelled. The men of the old world believed that this could only be the best possible sphere of existence to those who had succeeded in eliminating the painful circumstances of life. In Paul's view, the prospective joy is to be reached not by eliminating any of life's circumstances, but by finding for all adverse things a place in the development of humanity; he does not merely say that things work for good, but that they work *together*. Christianity differs from all other religions in this, that it is a reconciling religion; it causes to work together those things which the light of nature had held apart. It destroys the opposition between those objects which in the natural light can only be seen as opposites. What experiences, for example, are naturally more apart than joy and sorrow? Christianity finds between these a point of union,—it reconciles the ideas of the cross and the crown. What thoughts are naturally more separate than those of strength and weakness? Christianity finds a meeting-place for these in the strength which is perfected in weakness. What conceptions are naturally more hostile than those of rest and work? Christianity finds for these a sphere of union and co-operation in the rest which can strengthen a man to work all things. In the Pauline view, the creation reaches the goal of its development in a manner analogous to that in which it is supposed to reach it in the theories of modern science,—by dis-

Digitized by Google

covering for every incident a place in the evolution of universal law.

Let us now ask, What is the bond by which Christianity proposes to unite these opposites? Paul says that the goal of human development is good. Do we find in the New Testament any hint or indication of the nature of this good? In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have a very clear and definite one. The writer of that epistle expressly declares that this world exists for the sake of a moral ideal, that the purpose which prompts creation is the historical realization of a perfect personal life. 'Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, for whom also He made the ages.' The government of God is here distinctly asserted to be a moral government; the good towards which all things are working is goodness. Nor is it merely a vague Platonic goodness. For the first time in the history of religion, the plan of divine providence is seen pointing to a definite moral goal. The world is declared to exist for the sake of purity, but the purity contemplated is the purifying of the world itself. It is no longer the emancipation of the life from its individual conditions; it is the sanctifying of the life in the very sphere of its individuality. It is the Christ of history that is the goal of creation, the sanctity of a real historical being in a real historical scene. It is the purity of a life in union with material limitations, living within the narrow confines of the body,

Digitized by Google

subject to the physical frailties of human nature, nay, subject to these frailties in a more than ordinary degree, yet in the very act and hour of His subjection revealing a moral beauty of which the Platonist had never dreamed. Such is declared to be the ideal for which the world exists. It is towards its universal realization that the whole creation moves. All things work together, so that if possible that mind which was in Him may be in every man, and that the purity which was once historical may become the essence of all human history; for Him God has 'made the ages.'

Let us see now if looked at from this height any light is thrown upon the shades of human existence. When we come to discern in Christ the moral purpose and goal of God's government, do we find any possible key to the solution of the great problem of suffering? or at least do we find any suggestion which the light of nature fails to supply? In considering this point, it may be well briefly to glance at the efforts which the light of nature has made to solve those enigmas of suffering which perplex the natural view of the divine administration. The natural theories by which men have attempted to account for it may, we think, be reduced to three. The first is that which has endeavoured to explain suffering by the depreciation of the individual life; this has been the common tendency of the Eastern pre-Christian world. Men suffered, it was said,

Digitized by Google

because they were men, because they were only finite beings, and therefore subject to individual limitations. Individual life was itself vanity; it was a shadow, a dream, a delusion; and it therefore bore within itself the pain of unreality. Individuality kept a man outside the life of God; was it not fitting that the life of God should be unconscious of his sufferings? It will be found that this view is practically the same as that which denies a special providence. God is too great to be concerned in the petty interests of the individual; His government must be looked at on a large scale,—in its bearing on the welfare of nations, and in its influence on the progress of universal history. This was really the thought of the Brahmin. His whole attention was directed to the endlessly repeating circles through which the ages of the universe were passing, and in comparison with these circles the life of the individual, with its burdens of grief and pain, appeared to him a vapour. It may be doubted, however, if in a Christian atmosphere this worship of a merely general providence can ever be revived. In point of fact it has not been revived; even the English deists of last century did not in general adopt it. The reason is plain. It is almost impossible that an inhabitant of modern Christian Europe, provided he acknowledge the existence of a providence at all, should refuse to admit its application to the humblest as well as to the greatest events of life. For every inhabitant of

Digitized by Google

modern Europe is a dweller in a Christian atmosphere, and is therefore bound to receive Christianity as a fact; he may reject it as a theology, he cannot deny it as a historical phenomenon. But in admitting this he must admit a great deal more. The slightest study of the system of civilisation in which he lives, will suffice to show him that this historical phenomenon which he calls Christianity is the source of all the other phenomena which he generalizes under the name of European civilisation. He will see that all the mighty forces which he distinguishes as modern have received their first impulse from this force, which in its beginning seemed so humble and unobtrusive. He will perceive that there is scarcely a department of modern life which has not been coloured by this mellow Christian influence. He will be forced to acknowledge that it has tinged literature, glorified art, refined manners, purified morals, assuaged poverty, broken the power of slavery, and given a new bent to politics by vindicating the rights of man. And in acknowledging this, what does the modern European confess? Does he not admit, in the very act of stating these things, that the general providence which presides over the forces of surrounding civilisation has evolved itself out of one very special and very unlikely force,—a force whose essence was the power to bear, and whose glory consisted in the capacity it gave to suffer? Suffering can no longer be regarded as outside the range of

Digitized by Google

providence. By him who recognises the working in this universe of a divine intelligence, the power of the Cross will be reverenced as a chief element in its working. Whether he accept or reject the statements of dogmatic Christianity, he will bow before the majesty of practical Christianity; he will cease to limit the divine action to the thunder, the earthquake, and the fire, when he sees that these have been awakened by the command of the still small voice.

The second of the natural theories to account for the existence of suffering is dualism,—the creed of the Parsee. As we have seen, it recognises two principles in the universe, one the source of all good, the other the source of all evil, and it naturally accounts for suffering by referring it to the action of the latter. Of this theory we may say with even greater confidence what we said of the foregoing,—that it could no longer be held by the life of modern Europe. The doctrine of a merely general providence has been dispelled by a Christian atmosphere; the doctrine of two Gods has been dispelled by an additional modern influence,—the progress of science. Science by its very nature tends to unity, and with each century it has been making fresh strides towards its goal. It has found a universal law according to which the forces of nature work; it professes to have found, or to be on the road to finding, a universal force in which the forces of nature inhere. Its

Digitized by Google

aims at the establishment of unity are of the most startling character, and have by no means obtained the acceptance of all, yet the very boldness with which they are pressed shows conclusively the spirit of the age. An age which seeks to embrace in one law of evolution all the varieties of living species, an age which aims at discovering a unity between the life of the mollusc and the life of the man, is not likely to fall into the error of conceding to the phenomenon of suffering a separate origin from that which it assigns to normal happiness. Whatever explanation it attempts to give of the darker shades of this human existence, we may be sure it will be an explanation essentially different from that of the Parsee,—an explanation which will aim at the reconciliation of suffering with the existing order of things, and will seek to find for it a place in the great plan of this world's evolution.

The third theory by which the light of nature attempts to account for the sorrows of life, is that which regards suffering as a penal infliction, the punishment of man's transgression. This view may be regarded as that of the popular mind in all pre-Christian ages; it is also the dominating belief of the Jewish people in that period of their history which is most distinctively Judaic. Of all the views hitherto considered, this is the best and the truest. The truth which lies at the root of it is this, that wherever there is sin there is suffering. It is difficult

Digitized by Google

to conceive of any evil act which does not directly or indirectly produce pain. It would be a curious calculation to compute how much of the physical suffering in a great city is capable of being traced to some past evil in the lives of those who endure it, or in the lives of those who have preceded them. It seems to us that the result of such a computation would be to leave a comparatively small number unaccounted for by moral considerations. The connection between sin and suffering is not necessarily dissolved when a man repents of his evil way, nor even when a new life has come to him. The man who has wasted his constitution by intemperance will not get back the vigour of his frame by turning into a new path; if he has sown the seeds of disease, they will bear fruit even after the higher life has dawned. Kant is profoundly right when he says that the new man bears the punishment of the sins committed by the old.

But while all this is undoubtedly true, it is not the whole truth. It may be conceded that wherever there is sin there is suffering; is it equally true that wherever there is suffering there is sin? It may be even conceded that the majority of physical sufferings in man might directly or indirectly be traced to some moral cause; but in an inquiry such as this, men are not really asking the origin of individual sufferings, so much as the origin of suffering in the abstract. If there remained in the world one solitary

Digitized by Google

instance of physical pain which was incapable of being accounted for, that one instance would leave the problem as far from solution as if no case of suffering had ever received an explanation. It is the abstract fact of sorrow which calls forth the inquiries of the human mind, and that fact continues unsolved as long as one sorrow continues a mystery. Now it must be confessed that there are certain forms of suffering which are not the result of sin. The lower creation is subject to pain; perhaps this might be got over on the Platonic view that the material or animal nature is the essence of that which becomes sin in the man. But let this pass; when we ascend above sin, we find the presence of suffering equally as when we descend beneath it. There are some burdens which a man begins to bear only when he begins to master the evil that exists within him. There are certain pains which await him when he becomes good, and to which he becomes heir just on account of his goodness. In a highly spiritual sense it may be said, 'He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.' A bad man is blunted to the miseries of his fellow-beings; he is only conscious of his own. A man who has received the new life loses much of his own sorrow, but it must be confessed that in exchange for it he is filled with a deeper sense of the sorrows of those around him. It is impossible for him to refer this new impression of pain to any personal act of evil, nay, it is impossible for him not to see that it

Digitized by Google

has arisen simply on account of the decline of evil within him. As the sorrows of humanity press upon his soul, he will feel what the author of the Book of Job felt in the days of the later Judaism,—that there are sufferings in human nature which are incapable of being explained on the theory of penal infliction, and which must seek their explanation in some other and higher source than the natural depravity of man.

We find, then, that the suggestions of nature on this subject, even where they reach highest, do not cover all the facts of the case. Let us see now whether Christianity throws any fresh light upon the question. First of all, we think it ought to be admitted that Christianity does not throw nor attempt to throw on the matter any *retrospective* light; in other words, it does not seek to explain the *origin* of suffering. It seems, indeed, to us that there is a thought at the foundation of it, which, if accepted, would go far to clear away the mist. It would seem as if the possibility of suffering were involved in the Christian definition of God. When it is said that God is love, is it not implied that in the divine nature there must be at least a *capacity* to bear? There is indeed a love which demands no such capacity; the lower or sensuous impulse which man dignifies by that name, is built chiefly on the desire of selfish appropriation. But when love becomes a spiritual power, it seeketh not its own; it aims solely and entirely at the good

Digitized by Google

of its object, and is therefore potentially a state of care. If it be a spiritual love, it will seek its object's joy; if it be an infinite spiritual love, it will seek its joy through all contingencies. It will be compelled to suffer when its object suffers. It will be forced by its own strength, by its own infinitude, to follow the being of its solicitude wherever he may go, and the sorrows and falls of that being will inevitably become its sorrows and its cares. It appears to us that such a possibility is involved in the Christian definition of God. In proclaiming Him to be a love which is at once spiritual and infinite, Christianity seems to have lifted the thought of suffering from the sphere of the human into the region of the divine. We do not, however, claim this as the Christian explanation of the origin of pain; it is rather a suggestion than a direct doctrine of Christianity, and it is dangerous to build upon suggestions. A direct statement is universally understood, but that statement may suggest to me a meaning which it does not bear to you. We shall not, therefore, assign to Christianity a doctrine which it does not formally claim. It claims to enunciate no formal theory regarding the origin of suffering in the abstract. It agrees with Judaism in maintaining that wherever there is sin there is sorrow, but it certainly does not imply that there is no sorrow where there is no sin. There is a deep suggestiveness in the beatitude, 'Blessed are they that mourn,' and it is a suggestiveness that

Digitized by Google

points in an opposite direction from Judaism. It takes up the problem where the patriarch Job laid it down, and it carries it out to its logical issue. It recognises in human suffering elements which are not referable to human sin, but which only begin to work when sin has begun to die; and it professes to find for these elements a place in the divine ideal of humanity, and a work in the glorifying of the human soul.

Wherein consists this possible blessedness of suffering? How does Christianity support its assertion? As we have said, it makes no effort to explain the origin of sorrow; the task which it sets before itself is not the explanation, but the redemption of the past. It is in the future that Christianity seeks for a solution of the great mystery, and it points clearly to the direction in which such a solution may be found. The idea which Christianity brings to bear upon the mystery of suffering, is the thought that suffering itself will in a higher form of existence lose its character of sadness. To make its view quite clear, let us try to illustrate the matter from another department of study. It is well known and universally admitted that there are certain forms of animal life in which there are to be found organs for which no use has yet been discovered. But whenever we ascend to the type of the species, whenever we come to the comprehensive typical form which represents that particular class of animal, we find that the very

Digitized by Google

same organs have become eminently useful. If, then, the individual of any species exhibits a portion of the body for which no use has been found, that useless organ simply becomes a prophecy; it is the proof that this particular individual is not the type of the species, that there is a higher form coming, and that in the life of this higher form it must await the explanation of that which is imperfect in its own. Now it is precisely this thought which Christianity applies to the phenomenon of suffering. To the individual in his natural state, suffering betimes appears a useless and even a hurtful susceptibility; in other words, considered as a purely individual phenomenon, it is for the present not joyous but grievous.[1] But Christianity says this only proves that the nature of man has not yet arrived at its typical form. It declares that when humanity shall have reached that life which was all along the ideal of its creation, the very same suffering which now seems useless, shall become redemptive, and the same sorrow which now is grievous, shall become the source of a new and higher joy. It points to a typical man, to a new Adam, to a second head of creation, whom yet it declares to have been ideally the first head, the ideal for whose realization God made the ages. It tells us that in this second Adam that suffering which in the first Adam was a penalty and a pain, shall become its own remedy, shall open

[1] Appendix, Note 15.

Digitized by Google

up to mankind the avenue to a higher life, and as the prefiguration and prophecy of this development it points to the personal life of the second Adam Himself. In that life it shows us the divine power of sorrow. The first Adam is perfect without suffering, and when suffering comes he falls; the second is perfect through suffering, and greatest in His weakest hour. The first Adam is strong amid flowers; the second is conqueror in the midst of thorns. The first Adam is obedient through fear of death; the second becomes obedient even unto death. Nor does the sorrow of the typical man point only to an increase of human power, it points not less emphatically to an increase of human joy. The Son of man endures the cross and despises the shame, but He does so for the joy that is set before Him. In Him the world is introduced to a new thought,—the divine joy of sacrifice, the glory of self-forgetfulness, the certainty of finding the life which for another we have consented to lose. Man is confronted by the vision of a joy coming through that very process which the selfish man considers the height of sorrow, —the surrender of the individual will. He is startled to find that the event which of all others is misery to the natural heart, is blessedness to the life of the typical man, that the crucifixion of self magnifies the personal life and brings joy to the individual heart. Christianity creates a new desire in the world, the desire of that which the natural mind has in all ages

Digitized by Google

deprecated,—the power of giving up the human will to the divine will, and of saying not with resignation but with acquiescence, 'Thy will be done.'

In the light of this thought we are introduced to a fresh view of creation. In a high and spiritual sense we see that this world is indeed a scene of evolution rising from the natural to the supernatural, from the human to the divine. We see at the same time that the supernatural, though last in manifestation, is ever first in thought; that the image of the divine, though longest in appearing, is the form which all along beckons creation onward. Is not this distinctly implied in that remarkable utterance of the Apocalypse, 'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'? Is there not involved in these words the conception of a grand plan of evolution, by which the world from its very beginning is made to grow upwards towards a type of sacrifice, towards a joy which is deeper than the personal joy, and whose very life is purchased by the crucifixion of personal interest. We are made to understand that the sorrows of life in their deepest root are no accident, or chance, or contingency, that they are involved in the actual foundation of the world in which we dwell, that they form the ground plan of the stages through which we move, that they constitute the gateway through which opens the great road of human progress. We begin to see, dimly and imperfectly it may be, yet with a clearness unknown to the merely natural light, that the good for which

Digitized by Google

all things are working together is the Son of man, the typical man, the man perfect through suffering. That which we call the revealed is seen to exist before the natural, and that which we call the natural is seen to exist only as the evolution of the revealed, for at those foundations of the world which we term the power of nature, there is already working that thought which is to close the drama—the Lamb that is slain.

And here at last we have found the reconciliation between the existence of an individual providence and the existence of individual suffering. We have seen how the Eastern mind was unable to reconcile them. We have seen how, in its view, the sufferings which pressed upon the individual life appeared a barrier to the ingress of the divine life, and how the only destiny for the human was to lose its humanity in the divine. In the systems of Eastern philosophy, the individual was absorbed in the universal. But in this new system at which we have arrived, we have reached the very opposite conclusion; here, paradoxical as it may seem, the universal is absorbed in the individual. The circumstances of the natural world are to be gathered up into the life of a typical man, in whom their character is to be transfigured. Every valley is to be exalted, every mountain is to be brought low; the crooked is to become straight, and the rough places plain. It is not the abolition of the old circumstances which is contemplated; it is their transfiguration, the change in their aspect, the trans-

Digitized by Google

formation of their character. What the natural world calls joy is to be recognised as sorrow; what the natural world calls sorrow is to be recognised as joy. Suffering, whatever were its origin, and whatever may be its present tendency, is revealed as the possible avenue to a bright future, and the possible gate to a higher life. In the forecast light of that revelation, the doctrine of an individual providence is vindicated for all time. The sorrows which oppress the individual life are seen oppressing it, not because its personality is despised, but because its personality is so infinitely valued, they are preparing it for its union with a higher type of humanity, more intensely personal and more fully human. The psalmist-poet of Judea expresses thus his sense of the dignity of man: 'Thou hast put all things under His feet.' The writer to the Hebrews says that, looked at from the natural side, it is scarcely so: 'We see not yet all things subject unto Him.' But he declares that the supernatural shall vindicate the dignity of the natural, and reveal man's legitimate place in creation: 'We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour that He should taste death for every man.' In the sufferings of the Son of man, the sufferings of individual men are not the proof of a distant God, but the immanent presence of the divine.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE VI.

IMMORTALITY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.[1]

IN the previous lecture we were engaged in considering some of those modifying influences which the light of Christianity has exerted upon the doctrines of natural theology. We proposed to take up one by one its three recognised divisions,—the divine attributes, the divine government, and the immortality of the soul. We have now arrived at the third of these. We have to consider to what extent the light of Christianity has modified our old conceptions of the soul's immortality. Before entering on such an inquiry, there is one circumstance which arrests our attention on the very threshold. The doctrine of immortality has been always claimed as a doctrine of natural theology, and it is undoubtedly found in nearly all natural religions.[2] Yet it must be admitted that the belief in a future state is far more directly connected with Christian theology than

[1] We are here only called to treat the distinctively Christian immortality—life in Christ.

[2] See Appendix, Note 16.

Digitized by Google

with natural theology. Natural theology reveals God and immortality; Christian theology reveals God *in* immortality, or, which is the same thing, immortality in God. We can conceive the existence of a natural theology in which the belief in a future state is not included; we cannot for a moment conceive the existence of the Christian religion apart from the belief in immortality. The immortality which Christianity reveals is not a separate doctrine from the God whom Christianity reveals; it is itself the very life of God, that eternal life which His contact with the world communicates to the world. We shall therefore be prepared to find that in approaching the Christian atmosphere we are approaching a region where the soul's immortal destiny becomes more apparent, and where its hope of that destiny becomes more strong, and we shall not be surprised to discover that whatever modifying influence the new light exerts upon the old, is an influence which removes obstructions and renders the eye more clear.

Christianity nowhere professes to have proclaimed for the first time the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments; indeed, by implication it professes the contrary. When it says, 'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you,' it clearly makes an appeal to the natural instincts of the human mind. It suggests that these instincts had already pointed so persistently and so unmistakeably to the existence of another life,

Digitized by Google

that if there were no other life there would have been demanded from heaven a distinct revelation to the contrary; the parenthetical words would have absolutely no meaning unless it were assumed that the heart of man was already in possession of a great hope for the future. The New Testament, in fact, deals with the doctrine of immortality precisely as the Old Testament had dealt with the doctrine of God. The Old Testament does not begin by declaring the divine existence, but by proclaiming the divine action: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' So, in like manner, the new dispensation does not formally enunciate the doctrine that the soul will survive death; it takes it for granted that the light of nature has secured the belief in that doctrine. Its aim is to build upon the ground of nature, to reveal the responsibility which belongs to an immortal, to show the influence which such a hope should exert upon the secular life, to manifest the power which such a destiny should confer upon the individual actions. Christianity therefore contents itself with homologating the conclusions of antiquity as to the broad facts of immortality, reward, and punishment. It professes in this respect to leave uncontradicted the aspirations of the ancient Egyptian, of the Parsee, of the Platonist, and even of the worshippers of popular mythology, and it expresses its acquiescence in the words, 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' Nevertheless, while Christianity does

Digitized by Google

not claim to have enunciated the *fact* of immortality, it does very strongly claim to have thrown fresh light upon the nature of the fact; so fresh is the light which it professes to have brought, that it declares itself to have 'abolished death.' Indeed, the most superficial observer must see that, as a mere matter of historical fact, the belief in a future state exerts an influence over Christendom which it never exerted over heathendom.[1] This itself indicates that in Christianity the old thought of immortality has in some way or other been renewed, transfigured, glorified; and we proceed briefly to consider what are those new elements whose introduction into the old thought has contributed so powerfully to make immortality a power.

Now it seems to us that there are two tendencies belonging to the old world's conception of immortality which Christianity has expressly counteracted, and that in the counteraction of these tendencies lies the strength of the Christian doctrine, or what Paul would term 'the power of the resurrection.' And, first, there is a general tendency throughout heathendom to regard the immortality of the soul as something which consists in a change of physical conditions, something which is brought to man by the hour and the power of death. In the popular mythologies we are not surprised to find this, because the men who believe in mythology are necessarily in a sensuous

[1] See Appendix, Note 17.

Digitized by Google

condition; their immortality is and can be nothing but a change of locality, a transition from one house into another. Sometimes it is a narrower house, sometimes a wider and more splendid one, but in every case it is simply a different degree of the same existence. When we turn to Platonism, we find the aspiration after a state higher than the physical; indeed, the weak point of the Platonic immortality is just its undue depreciation of the physical. Nevertheless Platonism also looks to the physical as its emancipator,—its hope is in death. It looks upon the dissolution of the body as the liberation of the soul. It believes the immortal life to be excluded from the sphere of the sensuous and the temporal. It can see no prospect for the spirit of man except in that hour when the walls of his prison-house shall crumble into dust, and leave his soul untrammelled by the touch of time. But perhaps the heathen conception of immortality receives its strongest illustration in that wide-spread doctrine of the East,—the transmigration of souls. It is founded on the very notion that a change of physical conditions can of itself bring a change of moral powers, that what a man has failed to do in one earthly body may be accomplished by him in another. Let us not imagine that the doctrine of transmigration has no place in the light of modern nature; it has, on the contrary, a very distinct place in certain forms of thought which belong to Christian civilisation. The instinct which prompts

Digitized by Google

the belief in transmigration lies at the root of asceticism. A man feels the claims of the spiritual life to be too hard for him. He desires to be holy, but he is confronted by opposing desires; the temptations of the world strive against the promptings of his inner nature. He believes that transmigration would save him. Let him shut his eyes to the outward scene, let him lose sight of the objects which impede his heavenward aspirations, let him retire within himself and limit his observations to his own soul, and the spiritual life shall become to him a possibility and a reality. The instinctive faith in transmigration is not less clearly manifested in aspects of modern life which are more frequent than asceticism. It is seen in the tendency of men to believe that, if they had simply a change of circumstances, they would create for themselves a great pathway. It is seen in the prevalent notion that each individual man would be happier if he had his brother's cross instead of his own. It is seen, above all, in the inclination of the restless mind to find rest by simple locomotion, by change of locality, by transition from one scene into another, in illustration of the Psalmist's ancient prayer, 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest.' All these are reproductions of belief in the efficacy of transmigration. The transmigration of souls points to the hope of a higher spiritual life by a simple process of transition, by a mere change of

Digitized by Google

locality, by no other medium than an outward alteration of scene; and it only differs from its modern representatives in this, that the scene which it proposes is more thoroughly new, and that the process of transition is more thoroughly physical,—it is the process of death.

Here, then, is a tendency common to the ancient conceptions of immortality. The old world looks for the soul's immortality to the change in its physical conditions, and it finds that change summed up in the hour of death; death accordingly becomes to it the harbinger of the spiritual life. Now, upon this view of the subject Christianity has thrown a light which is entirely new. The immortality which Christianity reveals is not something which is brought by death at all; it is something which resists death, and which is able to resist it because it exists before it. Christian immortality is not a life which death brings into the soul, it is a life which belongs to the soul, and which, therefore, death is unable to destroy. The continuity of life in this system is never for a moment broken. Death introduces no pause in the march of human existence; it is simply jostled out of the way in its attempt to oppose its march. The immortality exists within the soul as its birthright, not merely outside the soul as its destiny. It is not primarily a change of locality, but an abiding state. It is no doubt unquestionable that the Christian doctrine of immortality demands for the soul a local habitation and a name. The

Digitized by Google

emphasis which it gives to the belief in human personality renders this inevitable; a personal existence which does not inhabit a locality is a contradiction in terms. But none the less does Christianity hold that no local circumstances whatsoever would of themselves suffice to constitute a heaven. It refuses to admit that any change of external conditions will be sufficient to secure the future happiness of man. To secure that happiness, it demands a new life for the soul. It insists on the reception into human nature of a principle of immortal youth which will invest any locality with its own youth and joy. It seeks to kindle in the human spirit a light which shall enlighten all things, and by whose inward brightness all outward worlds shall be seen. This principle of life and light is distinctively the Christian immortality, the element which resists death, the element which secures in any sphere the vision of beauty and the fruition of prosperity. And what lends all the more power to this doctrine, is the fact that it forms no isolated Christian phenomenon; it is in perfect harmony with the whole plan of the system. Christianity proclaimed to the world that the immortal principle was as necessary for time as for eternity, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.' Its morality is expressly based upon the doctrine that the life must lie behind the act, and that the purity without can only be reached by the purity within. The life which it

Digitized by Google

brings into the world is designed primarily *for* the world. It is sent as a help to the enjoyment of earthly things, it is sent as a support in the endurance of earthly calamities. Christianity does not admit that the present any more than the future world can be conquered from without. It would deny the power of prosperous circumstances of themselves to make a man prosperous, it would deny the power of asceticism to render a man pure. To secure prosperity and to secure purity, it requires the possession of that inward abiding life which is in the highest sense its own conception of immortality.

We have here already trenched upon the second tendency of heathendom; it is indeed necessarily involved in the other. If immortality be brought to the soul only by that change of physical conditions we call death, it follows that as long as man continues in the body his immortality is something in the *future*, not a possession but a hope. If, therefore, the first tendency of heathendom was its physical association of the idea of immortality, its second was the reference of that idea to a state of things not present but to come. The two tendencies are clearly separable in thought; the removal of the former would not necessarily remove the latter. I may cease to regard immortality as something which is brought by death, and may yet still continue to regard it as something which belongs purely to the future. In point of fact, this second tendency of the ancient world has lingered

Digitized by Google

longer than the first. Christendom no longer attaches so much credit to the moral power of physical death; it no longer regards matter as something which in its nature is opposed to spirit, and which requires to be rooted out ere the power of spirit can become paramount. But the popular mind of Christendom still clings to the notion that its immortality is something which awaits it, still adheres to the belief that the life which is to render it imperishable is a life which is to be given it in some far and unknown future. Here is a survival of old culture, the relic of a time and of a faith which has gone by. It has incorporated itself so closely with the new civilisation, that we have almost come to persuade ourselves of its being a part of that civilisation. We speak of the soul's immortal state as the hereafter, the future, the world to come. We regard the consequences of a man's sin as they will affect him here and hereafter,—a division which might be quite accurate if these words did not represent to us two totally unconnected states of being. In some instances we find men indulging the belief that the sanctions of the moral law lie entirely in this hereafter, that the present world goes for nothing in relation to reward and punishment, and that when the future comes it will begin its work by undoing the present and the past. We have called this a survival of ancient culture; with Christianity itself it has no other connection than that of contemporaneous existence. The conception which Christianity has introduced into the

Digitized by Google

doctrine of immortality is not so much that of a hereafter as that of an eternity. The expression 'future state,' so familiar in the popular intercourse of men, scarcely represents the Christian idea of the soul's deathless character; it is rather represented by the phrase, 'the higher life.' The revelation of the Christian immortality is not simply the revelation of a life which is to come; it is the proclamation of a life which is eternal, and which, therefore, is a present possibility. Eternity is not a state excluded from time; time is itself a portion of eternity, it is simply the name we give to the fragment of eternal existence which is bounded by our earthly years. The life of eternity in the Christian sense is round about time and within time; it does not need a future condition of things to bring it nearer. Men speak of 'going to heaven;' the expression invariably used by the New Testament is 'the kingdom of heaven coming to us.' The difference between popular language and scriptural language marks the difference between the Christian culture and that old pagan culture which has been incorporated with it. The heaven and the hell of antiquity were worlds to come; the heaven and the hell of Christianity are in the first instance present atmospheres. There are declared to be already in the moral world two atmospheres of life, both of which are capable of resisting the assault of death. One of these is that in which the natural soul already dwells. The man of sin and selfishness is declared by

Digitized by Google

Christianity to be now in the state called hell, and the sole question is how he is to be delivered from it: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.' In this remarkable passage the condemnation of sin is said to be a present fact, and the hell which it involves is declared to consist in the desire of that which is undesirable, in the love of that which is unlovely. But Christianity proclaims the existence of another and a higher atmosphere. It declares that there has come to the human organism a new and a divine Head, and that from this new source there is flowing down into all the members of the body a life that shall never die, His own eternal life. None the less is it a life which permeates time and begins in time. Every man who is in union with the divine Head is declared in the most unequivocal language to be already in possession of immortality, of eternity, of the state popularly called future: 'This *is* life eternal, to know Thee.' 'He that hath the Son *hath* life.' 'Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life.' 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die.' 'There are some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God come with power.'

These are amongst some of the most striking utterances of what may be called the Christian paradox of the doctrine of immortality. But perhaps there is one

Digitized by Google

more striking than any of these; we mean that form of expression so familiar in the Pauline epistles, which declares the human soul to be already partaker of Christ's resurrection. There is something almost startling in that utterance of Paul to the Colossians: 'If then ye are risen with Christ, seek the things which are above.' Paul is so sure of the fact, that he does not even make it the main clause of the sentence; he assumes it as something which could never be doubted, and his chief care is directed to the establishment of that which follows from it. And yet what is the fact which is here so interwoven with the Christian consciousness? It is not merely the promise of immortality, it is not simply a vision of that life which is possible for the human soul,—it is the recognition of an actual process of resurrection through which the followers of Christ are even now passing. Paul declares that what in the light of nature was a hope for the future, has become in the light of Christ an experience of the past, a fact already accomplished, a drama whose main act is done: 'Ye *are* risen.' Can we enter into the thought of the apostle? Had he a thought in his mind, or do his words express no more than a rhetorical rhapsody? So far from being rhetorical, they were to him the enunciation of a syllogism. Why does Paul say that if Christ is risen we are risen? it is because he takes for granted that Christ is the Head of the body, and that those who follow Him are members of His body. The primrose is

Digitized by Google

more than the prophecy of the summer, it is the head of the rising year; when it appears above the ground, the summer is potentially risen. Christ was to Paul the primrose of humanity, the Head of the human body. When the Son of man appeared above the dust of death, the vision came to Paul as a resurrection of the entire year. He saw in it more than a promise. To him the union between the Head and the members was so close, so deep, so intimate, that the rising of the one must of necessity mean the rising of the other. It is in the light of this thought alone that we are able to explain a fact which, from the mere standpoint of natural observation, must ever be a matter of surprise,—we mean the joyousness of the first Church of Christendom. It is perhaps not too much to say that the brightest period in the history of Christianity is the period in which, from the worldly side, its fortunes seem the darkest. We feel instinctively that the Church of the apostolic epistles is a Church of exuberant joy, at the very moment when we know historically that it is a community oppressed and afflicted, despised and rejected of men. Surrounded by adverse influences on every side, opposed on the one hand by the soil of its nativity, and on the other by the power of the empire, composed of members drawn chiefly from the lowest social strata, comparatively few in number and unmistakeably weak in personal weight, the Christian Church at this very moment reveals a spectacle of boundless con-

Digitized by Google

fidence, which it is hard to discover in the history of her prosperous years. But when we look into the epistles themselves, the ground of the mystery vanishes. We see that the confidence arose from the belief that the Church *was* a membership, that those who constituted it were the component parts of a living body, and that the Head of that body was already lifted from the grave. The primrose was up, and therefore the summer had potentially come. The first-fruits of the new season had appeared above the soil, and therefore its remaining product was potentially risen. Christendom claimed a vital union with its Head, and therefore it claimed already to be in possession of His immortality, to be partaker of His resurrection, to be recipient of His eternal life, to be raised together with Him.

Such, then, is the Christian conception of immortality, as distinguished from the merely natural conception. We must now inquire if the Christian conception contributes anything to the light of reason? Does it supply any missing link in the order of nature? does it suggest a pathway through any difficulty, which the order of nature has failed to reveal? It seems to us that it does, and we proceed to indicate one or two of the methods by which it achieves this end. No man denies that the light of nature, however little it may prove, has much to suggest on the subject of immortality, but it suggests some difficulties too. For one thing, it is evident that, so far as the five senses are concerned

Digitized by Google

there is at death an interruption to the bond of human brotherhood. The light of nature is forced to recognise that all the immortality to which she can point is one which passes beyond her own light; she sees but the portal of an unknown country. As long as a man remains in this world, he is linked with an iron chain, perhaps we should say with a golden chain, to the brotherhood of humanity. He has received an inheritance from the past, he will bequeath an inheritance to the future; and his life in every moment of the present is so influenced by the lives of others, that he can no more subsist alone, than a planet could continue to shine if its comrades were swept away. There is a law of moral gravitation which binds the living to the living, and as long as life lasts that law endures. But when death comes we seem to see a change. The golden chain is to all appearance broken. We can perceive no link of connection between the immortal life and the mundane life. The man who yesterday was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, appears to have burst away from the bond of human brotherhood, and to have passed into a region where the human exists no more. We cannot help thinking that it was a reaction against this feeling which contributed to suggest the belief in the doctrine of transmigration. Men wanted to think of their brother man as not wholly separated from the chain of human continuity, and therefore they fondly imagined that he had

Digitized by Google

passed into some other earthly form. Yet even transmigration did not fill the blank. So far as the living were concerned, the bond of brotherhood was as much broken as if the dead had left the earth, for the new form was in reality a new life, and never conveyed to the beholder any suggestion of the old. Nature proved powerless even to hint at the bridging of the chasm which death seemed to leave between the living and the departed.

But here Christianity steps in, and proclaims to the world a doctrine which, if accepted, would be indeed the missing link of nature, which, so far from destroying the natural hope of immortality, would supply the weak point in the natural hope, and bring it nearer to natural reason. It declares that the followers of Christ have a bond of humanity that can never be broken either by death or by life. It says the tie which binds the human family is a *divine* relationship,—we are members of a body whose Head is already risen. The pure human soul, the soul which reveals God's ideal of humanity, can never by any process be separated from its environment. Go where it may, whether in this world or in other worlds, it can never travel beyond the limits of that great chain which binds it, for it is a chain whose topmost link rests upon no contingency, but upon one who is the absolute Head of the whole circle of creation. In passing into that sphere which the light of nature calls unknown, it cannot pass beyond

Digitized by Google

the pale of humanity, for the unknown region has itself been filled and sublimated by the presence and the headship of the Son of man. Such is the thought which Christianity has superinduced upon the light of nature. We need not say that where it is received it opens up vistas of perspective to which the light of nature is a stranger.[1] It suggests a possible link of association by which the soul may resume its human memories. It reveals a central thought which can keep alive in the spirit of man in any world the continuity of his sense of responsibility. Above all, it supplies the key to that doctrine so prominent in the Anglican Church,—the communion of saints,—a doctrine which annuls the distinction between the dead and the living, and enables the soul on earth to hold communion with the spirits that have passed beyond it. Christianity lifts human nature from its local and temporary station, and sets it potentially on the throne of the universe; it makes its empire co-extensive with the circle of creation.

But there is a second difficulty suggested by the light of nature,—it refers to the embodiment of the dead. 'Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon,' is the aspiration of the Gentile apostle. It is an aspiration which comes from the very depth of his human nature, and on that account he is not afraid to express it; he feels that nothing which is natural to humanity can be antagonistic to revelation.

[1] Appendix, Note 18.

Digitized by Google

The clothing of the soul is indeed the hard point in nature. No man in the world doubts an immortality of some kind, not even the materialist; it is impossible to conceive the annihilation of an existing substance. Nature reveals perpetual change, but no destruction; old forms pass away to make room for new forms, yet the elements of the old are taken up into the new. Nevertheless it is just here that nature fails to satisfy the soul's immortal instinct, for it happens that the form or embodiment is the very thing which the soul desires to keep. Its greatest dread of death has ever been the fear of being unclothed. It knows that without its clothing it would be without its personality, would become a vague mysterious essence, living an undefined existence, and inhabiting a region which must ever be inaccessible to every finite thought. The dearest thing to the natural soul has always been its personality; and it is just because death has threatened to rob it of this, that death to the natural soul has generally been dark and dreadful. To the popular mind of Greece, and to the popular mind of Judea, death was associated with a peculiar repulsiveness, and it was so for precisely the same reason; alike to the Greek and to the Jew, death was a diminution of personality. The spirits of the departed became shadows, they ceased to be substantial forms; they passed into a world which was almost equivalent to a land of dreams, where the spirits of men became

Digitized by Google

void of emotion, of impulse, almost of consciousness. No doubt the later stages of Judaism arrived at a brighter hope, in the prospect of a final resurrection in which the spirit should resume its form, but even here there was something wanting to satisfy the thirst for immortality. A final resurrection could guarantee the soul for the far future, but what of the long intermediate ages? Was death to be a temporary suspension of intelligence? Was the spirit of man to pass into a sleep of centuries, from which it was only to be wakened by the trumpet of the judgment day? That was the question which Judaism could not solve, and which Christianity itself would fail to solve, if it had no other hope than that of a final resurrection. But Christianity has something more to bring. The immortality which it proclaims to the world is not simply a reproduction of the immortality of Judaism;[1] if it has accepted from Judaism its doctrine of a final resurrection, it has added to it another doctrine which is all its own,—a doctrine which provides not merely for the interests of the far future, but offers an immediate refuge from the present horrors of the grave.

That doctrine is the human membership in the body of Christ. When the apostle says we are members of His body, he intends to give expression to a fact whose truth is not limited to the present

[1] Paul calls death *sleep*, but probably only to describe its appearance to the spectator.

Digitized by Google

scene of existence. He declares that death will not be able to unclothe him, and he assigns a reason for his declaration, which, if founded on historical reality, must be thoroughly satisfactory: 'We know that if the house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' When he speaks of being clothed upon by his house which is from heaven, he is alluding to the fact that he is already potentially partaker in the resurrection body of the Son of man. He means to indicate that death cannot disembody his soul, cannot deprive his spirit of a dwelling-place, cannot send him out as a vague abstraction into a world of equally vague abstractions. He maintains that such a catastrophe is no longer possible; that he is in possession of another body, independent of the frail and perishable earthly one; that he is already the member of a divine organism which is not subject to decay, and that in union with this organism, his soul, even at the moment of death, shall find a habitation. If we ask in what mode Paul conceived this embodiment of the soul at death to be effected, the question is one which cannot and ought not to be answered with dogmatism; he has nowhere formally stated his view of the material connection between the resurrection body of Christ and the individual embodiment of the departed soul. It seems to us, however, that the thought in his mind was this: There have been two

Digitized by Google

heads to humanity,—a first and a second Adam. As a matter of fact, all the natural bodies of human beings which now exist in the world have been evolutions from the one body of the first Adam; they are but the multiplication through long ages of the primal substance of humanity.[1] Even so in the second and higher Adam there is a body which is capable of an endless multiplication, of an infinite series of partitions. By a spiritual generation, whose method to us is as yet unknown, the body of the second Adam shall be subjected to a process analogous to that of the first, and shall reproduce its own image in a multitude of newborn lives.[2] Such we believe to be the view of Paul, but we do not press the point. He has not definitely formulated his view, and therefore he has left a margin for human imagination. But upon the general fact there can, we think, be no doubt. It seems evident that in the membership of the soul in Christ's risen body the apostle of the Gentiles saw more than a strength for the present hour; he saw in it a hope for the future, and a hope precisely in that place which nature had left a blank. He beheld in it the assurance that he would not require to wait unclothed till the dawning of a final resurrection morning, that in the immediate hour of death there was provided

[1] In Paul's view, which is that of Genesis, all humanity ultimately springs from a *single* form.

[2] Is not the participation in Christ's resurrection body foreshadowed in the distribution of the sacramental elements?

Digitized by Google

for his spirit a local habitation, and that the continuity of his earthly being would be preserved in a human form.

We come now to a third point on which the light of nature has left something to be explained; it differs from the two foregoing in being ethical rather than speculative. It has been frequently urged by the deist, reasoning from the principles of pure nature, that the belief in a future state lowers the value of a man's moral action. It has been said that a man who does good in order that he may gain heaven, or refrains from evil in order that he may avoid hell, is morally in a lower position than the man who does good simply because he loves good, and refrains from evil simply because he hates evil. And, indeed, we confess that if we had no other standard than the deistic,—in other words, than that which is called the purely natural,—we should ourselves be shut up to this conclusion. If immortality be *solely* in the future, if it be a life which has no reference whatever to this present life, if, in short, it has no connection with our moral actions beyond the promise of a future reward offered for their successful performance, it would seem to follow that he who could perform them without the promise of the reward would be a spiritually higher being than he who required such an incentive. But the moment we have assimilated the Christian atmosphere, we are forced to abandon the deistic standpoint. That

Digitized by Google

atmosphere, as we have seen, ushers us into a new conception of immortality, a conception in which it is no longer merely future, but intensely present and immediately active. The immortality which Christianity reveals, is not so much the motive *for* which a man works, as the motive power *by* which he works. It is not so much the hope in a far future, which by its incentive of coming glory beckons him on, as the strength of a present life, which by the impulse it imparts to his heart and to his hand enables him to renew his earthly days. In such an immortality as this there is no selfishness. It is no longer a state which is foreign to the moral nature of man; it is itself his moral nature sublimated, enriched, glorified. It is a more complete experience of the inward power of holiness, a more perfect realization of the incomparable charms of virtue. The man who is holy through the power of the Christian immortality, is holy through the love of holiness, pure through the power of purity, good through the vital strength of the very life of goodness.[1]

But the link which of all others has been supplied to the chain of nature by the Christian conception of immortality, is the infinite value of a human soul. We have already in the course of these lectures had occasion to mark how the exclusive contemplation of external nature has tended to weaken individual hope. There are times when we gaze into the vast expanse

[1] Appendix, Note 19.

Digitized by Google

of the heavens, and come back to ourselves almost in despair, uttering the refrain of the old Psalmist's words: 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' It is, indeed, only in the awakening of our moral consciousness that we are able to combat such a thought; it is only when we recognise the infinite claims of conscience that we are able to master the crushing sense of this physical infinitude. Yet even Judaism could not reach a clear light of immortality; however perfect was its sense of God's law, it had a deep sense of man's inability to fulfil it. In the course of time there had appeared no life which could suggest to the human soul the spectacle of moral infinitude, because there had appeared no life in which humanity had failed to detect a flaw. That life came with Christianity. Explain the phenomenon as we may, adopt what theory we please of the person of its founder, the fact remains undisputable, that Christianity has bequeathed to the world the portrait of an unblemished personality. The mythical theory, even could it prove itself, would be powerless to shake this vital fact. If we were forced to believe that humanity, by a stupendous miracle, had excogitated out of its own depths the moral portraiture of the Son of man, the conclusion would still remain untouched, that it had excogitated a perfect portraiture, and that in giving to the world this picture it had revealed the infinite value of a human soul. For this is, after all, the crowning evidence which the

Digitized by Google

New Testament gives of man's immortality. If we were asked to lay our hand on that aspect of the Son of man which most of all suggests the undying character of human nature, we should point not to His promise of the many mansions, not to the manifestation of His power to arrest the march of death, not even to the full completion of that power in the fact of His own resurrection, but to that which underlies all these things,—the sinless humanity, the unsullied moral being. It is here that first and foremost we catch, as from the heights of Pisgah, a glimpse of the promised land. It is here that for the first time in the world's history there is suggested to the spirit of man the thought of its own infinite possibility, and the direction in which that possibility will be found. Within the limits of a human form conscience asserts the limitlessness of its empire, the infinitude of its claim, the unconditioned splendour of its goal. We learn that in the moral sphere we have a surer word of prophecy than in either the sphere of the physical or the region of the intellectual life. We learn that the power which can say so imperatively 'Thou shalt,' 'Thou shalt not,' has already transcended the limitations of the seen and temporal. Above all, we learn that the command is no delusion. We see its requirement fulfilled in a spotless human soul, and in that fulfilment we see our hope of immortality. In the vision of the sinless humanity, we feel that already we are in

Digitized by Google

communion with the things which are unseen and eternal.

Such is the Christian demonstration of the soul's immortality,—the vision of the moral dignity of man. Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since that vision was first given to the world, but at the end of them it may still be said that its power is not dimmed, nor its natural strength abated. We have passed, indeed, into a totally different intellectual atmosphere from that which witnessed the dawn of Christianity, and to many it seems as if the old belief in human dignity must surrender to the new conditions in which man dwells. Science has taken the place of the spontaneous contemplation of nature, and the latest researches of science appear on a first view to point to the humbling of human intelligence. We have entered into a world where the scientific watchword is evolution, where the scientific aim is the reduction of all things to the unity of a common origin. We are told that man must now be content to accept that life which is in him as a possession which he shares in common with the beast of the field, differing indeed in the intensity of its degree, but essentially the same in kind. We are told that the life which animates the world is but one existence variously developed, 'sleeping in the plant, dreaming in the animal, waking in the man.' That this common origin of life has been established as a demonstrable fact, science itself does not hold; that

Digitized by Google

it ever will be so established, we for our part do not believe. But in the face of modern fears we would simply ask, If it should be proved to be true, what then? We might well return as an answer the testimony of one of its most competent and distinguished supporters. In the conclusion of that long and able article on evolution which he has written for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in conjunction with Professor Huxley, Mr. Sully has not scrupled to point out how easily the modern view of evolution lends itself to the old belief that all things exist for the sake of man.[1] And, indeed, a moment's reflection must show that he has spoken truly. If evolution be true, if Darwinism be the law of creation, science has given back to man with her left hand what she has taken away with her right. She has placed him at the head of the earthly creation, at the climax of this world's development, so far as that development has yet advanced. To him all things tend. Science does not say that they tend voluntarily; she professes to ignore the question of final causes, but none the less does she maintain that the course of the history of creation has been an onward and upward march towards the formation of a human soul. That human soul can thus not only look down from an eminence on the stages which have preceded it, but can see in those stages the servants and ministrants that have, consciously or unconsciously, prepared its way.

[1] Appendix, Note 20.

Digitized by Google

This is much; but science, if rightly interpreted, has even more to tell. What is the principle of the Darwinian law? it is the survival of the strongest, the power of certain forms to outlast other forms. Yet what is the principle of survival but another name for the principle of immortality? that which lives longest is that which has most of the immortal in it. Here, then, by the admission of its own advocates, is the end of evolution,—the development of the immortal or surviving element. And what by the same admission has been hitherto the surviving element, what is that force of nature which reveals itself in this world as superior to all other forces? It is the spirit of man. Man is the latest product of nature, because he is the strongest product of nature; and he is the strongest product, because within him there is most of life and least of death. All things have been tending towards his immortality, and that by which he differs from the series of preceding gradations is just the possession of that immortal principle which these gradations have evolved.

Such is the legitimate conclusion which a believer in Christianity would be entitled to draw from the doctrines of modern science, if these doctrines were proved to be established facts. The hope of immortality would not be destroyed, would not even be weakened; it would simply be shifted into a new channel. As it is, the proof of these doctrines remains still in abeyance, and religion can afford to await the

Digitized by Google

issue without fear. Meantime it seems to us that Christianity would do well to make her apologetic stronghold that principle of survival which is exhibited in herself. If man has been the most immortal force in nature, Christianity has been the most immortal force in man. She has shown her power of survival by her power not only to outlive successive stages of culture, but to enfold these, while they existed, within her own atmosphere. We do not measure the survival of Christianity by the geographical extent of its dominions: the religions of the East have frequently enjoyed a wider domain. We do not measure it by the number of its votaries: Buddhism has in this respect far excelled it. We do not measure it by the actual duration of its earthly years: most of the Eastern forms of worship have laid claim to a longer antiquity. But comparatively small as is the number of its votaries, and comparatively short as has been the duration of its years, Christianity has shown within its sphere a power of survival which no other religion can claim. The religions of the East have stretched over wide geographical areas, and endured without change through the course of many centuries; but over all that space, and through all that time, there has been prevailing only one form of culture. The East is constitutionally moveless, inert, stagnant; is it not in keeping with its character that its forms of faith should be moveless, inert, and stagnant too? But Christianity has been cast into a

Digitized by Google

world of change. The scene of its development has been the ever-fruitful and the ever-varying soil of Europe. It has passed through a multitude of vicissitudes, political, social, and moral. It has lived longer in nineteen centuries than Brahmanism has done in three millenniums; its power of survival has been manifested by its universal power to adapt and assimilate. It has seen and survived not merely different, but contrary stages of civilisation. It began amid the fires of imperial persecution, yet it was not consumed. It passed next into the enjoyment of imperial power, yet it has outlived the perilous prosperity. It next became a theocratic priesthood, but it has survived the debasement of its mediæval corruptions. It was called by and by to experience the conflict of its faith with a new heaven and a new earth: the Ptolemaic gave place to the Copernican system of astronomy, and the Christian dignity of man threatened to vanish like a dream. But it has not vanished: it has survived the change, and found in it the starting-point for a new march of mind. If ever there was a force which has seemed to hold the secret of immortality, that force has been Christianity. Its power has never lain in the resistance, but always in the appropriation, of surrounding influences; and analogy would lead us to conclude that the source of its strength in the past shall be the source of its strength for the future. If we were asked by a struggling mind of the nineteenth century what

Digitized by Google

should be his religious attitude in relation to the current speculations, we should answer, If you are in doubt about Christianity, do with it in the meantime as science does with her own theories. The man of modern science out of a few preliminary probabilities constructs a grand hypothesis of Darwinian evolution, and he assumes that hypothesis to be true until the facts shall prove it to be false.[1] He applies it as a key to the lock of the universe; and wherever the key suits the lock, he comes into possession of a fresh argument. Christianity also has its preliminary probabilities. It comes to us with the antecedent prestige of having opened the doors of many universes, of having proved the fitting key to unlock the treasures of successive civilisations. Shall we suspend our faith in Christianity until the speculations of the nineteenth century shall have endorsed its truth? Not so. Rather shall we go out to meet the existing culture, and apply once more to the lock that key which has fitted so many doors. We will not wait for the new culture to interpret Christianity; we shall bring Christianity to interpret the new culture. We shall give it at the least a hypothetical assent, that hypothetical assent which science claims for her theories; and we shall try its power by that standard which has hitherto been unfailing,—its strength to survive the mutable, and its capacity to blend with universal life.

[1] Appendix, Note 21.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

NOTE 1, PAGE 10.

IT is well known that the apologists of last century did not give prominent emphasis to what are distinctively called the doctrines of grace. They employed against the deist his own rationalistic weapons, and they confined themselves to the sphere where such weapons would be available. Perhaps the error of these apologists consisted in too much narrowing the rational sphere of theology. Their apologetic neglect of the evangelical element in Christianity did not originate in any doubt of the truth and efficacy of that element; it originated in the belief that, true and efficacious as it was, it was yet incapable of being reached by the natural powers of the human mind, that it inhabited a region into which the consciousness of man could not directly penetrate, but which it could only approach through the intervention of a foreign power. The distinctive truths of Christianity were regarded as supernatural not merely in their origin but in their nature; and as

Digitized by Google

they were incapable of being understood by the reason of him who subscribed them, they were incapable of being applied to the reason of him who denied them. It was thus an ultramontane tendency which led the apologists of the last age to confine their attacks on deism to the proof of miracles, the verification of prophecy, and the exhibition of the utility and value of Christian morals. The tendency has survived in some of the best apologists of our own century. In the article 'Christianity' which he wrote for the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, and which has since appeared in another form, Dr. Chalmers has not hesitated to base the main strength of Christianity on its external evidence. He says there are two ways in which we may judge of the truth of a statement,—by testing the credibility of the message, and by testing the credibility of the messenger. In the case of Christianity, he regards the former course as no longer open to the inquirer. We cannot determine the truth of Christianity by the credibility of its message, for that message is by supposition beyond the reach of our faculties: man cannot know the mind of God, and therefore he is not in a position to judge whether the revelation of God is in congruity with His own mind. In a question of Christian evidence, reason has only one function; it cannot sit in judgment on the divine will: all it can do is to determine whether that will has been revealed. There has come to the world what

Digitized by Google

purports to be a message from God; if it be a message from God, it cannot be judged in itself; the only task within the province of reason is to decide by external evidence whether the messengers are men whose testimony is to be believed.

Such, then, according to Chalmers, is the mission of the natural mind in relation to revealed truth: it has to judge, not whether the will of God is congruous with nature, but whether the will of God has been historically revealed; and if on this point it should reach an affirmative conclusion, it has to bow implicitly to the supernatural authority of the mandate. Now, if it be so, it seems to us a misnomer to speak, as we commonly do, of the will of God being *revealed;* we ought to say simply that it has been *declared.* The revelation of a will is something more than its mere announcement; if it be nothing more, then Judaism had already a perfect revelation. What makes Christianity in this respect superior to Judaism, is just the fact that what was formerly *announced* has now been *explained.* Revelation, if it be anything, must be a clearing up; and whatever is cleared up is brought into congruity with the human understanding. Christianity professes to be a revelation, and therefore its highest evidence must be the credibility of its own message. Yet this fact, so far from weakening the credibility or the authority of the messenger, is precisely that which constitutes the ground of his authority, for in Chris-

Digitized by Google

tianity the messenger is Himself the message, the revealer is Himself the object of revelation, and the belief in Him who speaks is at the same time the assent to the thing which is spoken. The credibility of the message is made one with the credibility of the messenger in the utterance, 'I am the truth.'

The view of Dr. Chalmers is strongly prefigured in that portion of Bishop Butler's work which deals with the doctrine of atonement. He has adopted the common division of Christ's work into the three offices of the prophet, the priest, and the king (*Analogy*, part II. chap. v. p. 131, Barnes' edition, 1859). He finds no difficulty in recognising a natural basis for the first and third of these: Christ the prophet and Christ the king may be paralleled in the government of nature. But when he comes to consider the divine priesthood, he is inclined to regard it as occupying a different plane: he is disposed to treat it as for the most part mysterious, and requiring to be judged of through another than the natural medium. Now this is perhaps the part of Butler's work which will find least acceptance with modern thought. The tendency of the nineteenth century, in every department of study, has been to reach that unity which underlies the distinctions of things, and theology has not escaped its influence. The theologian of our day will naturally be disposed to view the three offices of Christ's work as he is tending to view the two natures of Christ's person.

Digitized by Google

The most evangelical thought in Germany has of late years been seeking to discover the unity of the God-man. Recognising a distinction between the divine and the human in Christ, it is unwilling to admit that the distinction amounts to a spatial separation. It would demur any longer to say that as man He slept in the ship, and that as God He stilled the waves; it seeks to realise that He is divine where He is human, and that He is human where He is divine. Perhaps we might illustrate its position by a phenomenon of the human mind. Man has a power of imagination, and he has also a power of memory, yet there is no single act of imagination which does not involve memory, and there is no single act of memory which does not involve imagination, understanding by that word the power to represent an idea. Even so the theological thought of the nineteenth century is seeking more and more, in every act of the Master, to find the unity underlying the distinctions of His person, to see the Son of man in the Son of God. Working upon the lines of this tendency, we have endeavoured in the third and fourth lectures to find the same unity underlying the kingly and priestly offices of the Redeemer, have sought to show that His power is not the antithesis of His sacrifice, that He is king where He is priest, and that He is priest where He is king. If such a conclusion were attained, its effect would be to bring within the range of natural ex-

Digitized by Google

perience a much larger portion of the doctrine of atonement than can be admitted by the system of the analogy.

It is quite true, indeed, what Butler says, that we are not judges of the efficacy of the atonement antecedently to revelation (*ibid.* p. 133). In accordance with this view, we have pointed out in the first lecture that the deepest need is only definitely recognised in the moment of its supply. But while we admit that we are not judges of the efficacy of this doctrine antecedently to revelation, we hold that *after* revelation we are judges of it in a natural and not in a supernatural manner. The doctrine of atonement professes to make its appeal to human love, and it professes to ground that appeal upon the manifestation of an antecedent divine love: 'We love Him because He first loved us.' If the love which is called forth be natural, the manifestation of love which has called it forth must be natural too. It can only influence human nature where it touches human nature. Doubtless there must lie behind it a region of mysteries unexpressed and inexpressible, but it is not that region which appeals to the love of man. The soul which finds rest in a vision of the redeeming work, finds rest in that part of the work which has come within the range of its human experience; it yields up its nature to the operation of the new life, because it already beholds in that life a condescension to the limits of its nature.

Digitized by Google

Note 2, Page 12.

In calling the theology of Christian Wolf and his school 'the most sober Protestantism,' we have intended to describe the fact that it occupies an intermediate position between the preceding supernaturalism and the subsequent negative rationalism. Previous to the rise of that theology, the Lutheran Church had relapsed into a position somewhat analogous to the Ultramontanism which preceded the Reformation. The Reformation contained what is called a material and a formal principle, the former being justification by faith, and the latter the means of grace. It was thus an honest attempt to unite those human and divine elements which had been separated by the later mediævalism. But, as Dorner points out, it was not long before the Reformation itself abolished the union it had accomplished. The two elements which had been united again became separated, and the first century of the Reformation did not pass until its followers were found ranged in two opposing camps. One party held by the pre-eminence of the material principle. They adopted justification by faith as the watchword of Protestant freedom, and held it as the safeguard of the individual against absorption in the life of the Church. Another party stood fast by the formal principle—the creeds and confessions of Protestantism. They were not so

Digitized by Google

much impressed with the human as with the divine element in the new movement. They did not attach so much importance to faith as to *the* faith, did not place so much value on the freedom to choose a new creed as on the efficacy and the persistence of the creed which had been chosen. The progressive and conservative elements of the Reformation were really a debate on the question to what extent the human mind was a judge of the divine revelation. The controversies of Major and Amsdorf, of Strigel and Flaccius, of Osiander and Chemnitz, were in reality controversies to determine how far the divine communication was natural, and how far it was alien to the human soul. It was to meet these divergent views, it was to restore if possible the broken harmony of the Reformation, that there was drawn up in 1575 that form of confession known as the Formula of Concord. It is not our province here to enumerate the points of that document; the student will find them ably indicated in Shedd's *History of Doctrines*, vol. ii. pp. 154–168, and Dorner's *History of Protestant Theology*, German edition, pp. 320–329. We have only to point out here that the Formula of Concord, however abortive in its efforts, was a sincere and laudable attempt to restore the first days of Protestantism, and to bring back the spirit of the Reformation to its original reconciliatory bias.

Yet, to say that the Formula of Concord proved abortive, is to say too little; it became itself the

Digitized by Google

cause of a new divorce between the human and the divine element. The document ultimately proved retrogressive, and the point in which its regress became apparent was the doctrine of atonement. Lutheranism had been much engrossed by the question whether the efficacy of Christ's atoning work consisted in His passive or in His active obedience, whether it lay in His endurance of suffering or in His power to keep the law? The Formula of Concord decided in favour of His active obedience, but it did so in such a way as might help to reconcile the controversy. It held that the efficacy of the Redeemer's work lay in His keeping of the law, but it virtually went on to say that this keeping of the law was itself a species of suffering, as it was something which Christ, from His divine nature, did not need to do. The result of such a decision must be evident: it was the same result which Ritschl has pointed out as following the theology of Anselm (*History of the Doctrine of Satisfaction*). If the divine nature of Christ makes His keeping of the law a work of supererogation, there is interposed a natural gulf between divinity and morality. A God who is out of law is in the worst sense of the word a supernatural God; if He be not united to man in the essence of his moral consciousness, He can have no point of union with man anywhere. Accordingly, from the publication of the Formula of Concord, we find that the Lutheran Church went more and more

Digitized by Google

back to the position of the later mediævalism. The next hundred years of its history may be regarded as distinctively the dogmatic age of Protestantism. Faith was superseded by *the* faith, the form took precedence of the spirit, and the outward authority of the Bible usurped the place of that higher and deeper authority which it claims to exert over the human soul.

The Wolfian theology of the eighteenth century was the second great attempt of Lutheranism to restore the balance between the human and the divine. Its way had been prepared by the philosophies of Spinoza and Leibnitz, which, different in other respects, were agreed on the paramount claims of reason. The school of Wolf simply translated into theology the tendency which had already appeared in philosophy. It strove to reconcile the claims of the natural and the supernatural. It gave to revelation the priority in time; the human understanding could not discover the truth of God; God must Himself reveal it. Nevertheless, when a man accepted the revelation, it ceased to be beyond his understanding; it became an object of reason, and was made capable of human demonstration. Many divines have looked askance at this Wolfian movement; they have regarded it as the originating cause, as it is admittedly the historical precursor, of those systems of negative Rationalism which denied revelation altogether. Nor are we indisposed to admit the logical sequence; it

Digitized by Google

is in truth not difficult to trace. The power to demonstrate a doctrine by reason was practically made the test of the reception of divine revelation. When a man came to find that certain doctrines resisted all his efforts at demonstration, the alternative was forced upon him either of sacrificing the revelation or of sacrificing his spiritual estimate of himself. Self-love generally turned the scale in favour of the former course. When a doctrine refused to submit to the forms of the understanding, the theologian solaced himself with the hope that perhaps after all it might not be in the Bible. What a man wishes to find, he generally succeeds in finding. Negative Rationalism was not a sudden growth; it was the gradual modification and ultimate elimination of those points in Christian theology which reason found itself unable to rationalize. The truth is, the Wolfian theology very narrowly missed hitting on a great principle. If it had substituted for the terms *reason* and *understanding* the Pauline word 'consciousness,' it would have expressed the true relation between the natural and the revealed. A revelation must appeal to human consciousness; and any doctrine which does not at some point touch the human consciousness, however true it may be in itself, is not a revelation to man. If, therefore, the Wolfian theology had simply declared that when a man accepts revelation he accepts something which he can verify by conscious experience, it would have assumed a

Digitized by Google

thoroughly Pauline position. But a thing may be an object of consciousness which is not an object of reason. Consciousness is a wider word than reason; it comprehends many spheres into which the logical understanding cannot penetrate. We may know what we cannot explain, we can feel what we do not understand; and to limit the field of knowledge to the region of the understanding, is at once to narrow and to lower the possibilities of the human soul.

Nevertheless, when all has been said, we must admit that in intention the Wolfian theology was pure. If it became the logical source of negative Rationalism, it did so against its will, and ought not to be charged with the moral consequences which flowed from it. It meant well to the interests of Protestantism. It designed to bring back the Protestant spirit, while yet it preserved the claims of dogmatic truth; and it strove to afford some scope to the researches of natural reason, while yet it retained inviolate the supernatural authority of revelation.

Note 3, Page 12.

The history of the relation of the natural to the supernatural in the pre-Reformation ages is a subject not free from difficulty. Reuss thinks that the earliest use of the word 'faith' in the apostolic Church was its employment to denote, not a transcendental faculty, but a simple hope in the mercy of

Digitized by Google

God. In his view, it was something which pointed not to the acquisition of present knowledge, but to the prospect of future salvation (*History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age*, vol. i. page 420, translated by Annie Hardwood). Reuss, however, treats the Epistle of James as the embodiment of the earliest Christian thought. He is undoubtedly right in finding in this epistle the use of the word 'faith' here indicated; but whether the epistle itself can be regarded as the earliest dogmatic expression of Christian truth, is a point by no means settled, and by no means to be easily settled; it is perfectly possible that the Pauline may be the earlier view. In the system of Paul, faith is not simply a hope in the future, but a source of present knowledge. Yet even here we should not be disposed to call it a *transcendental* source of knowledge. Paul opposes faith to sight, but never to reason or to the natural consciousness; and we have sufficiently exhibited in the text his tendency to seek a harmony between the human and the divine.

When we pass to the patristic period, we find that the Christian fathers are on both sides of this question. On the one hand, they admit a harmony on many points between the religion of Christ and the religions which preceded Christ. Tertullian, though essentially an empirical mind, bases the proof of God on the human consciousness. Justin Martyr is willing to allow to Socrates the name of Christian.

Digitized by Google

The Eastern Church in general is built upon what Neander calls a world-appropriating tendency, a tendency to seek and to incorporate all that is good in mundane systems. In the view of some, Plato was the heathen counterpart of Moses, the schoolmaster who was to do for the Gentiles what the lawgiver did for the Jews—bring them to Christ. Although the Eastern Church was disposed to make the receptive organ of divine revelation in some sense a transcendental faculty, it did not regard it as transcendental in the sense of being superhuman; it was something which belonged to the original constitution of humanity, and which only transcended humanity in its fallen and sinful state (see Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*). But it is just here that there emerges the other side of the question. When we look closely, we find that if the fathers allowed to heathen systems any element of truth, they did not allow it on the ground of what would now be called a science of religion, but simply on the ground of an original divine revelation of which the heathen nations, even in their debasement, retained some fragmentary memories. The early patristic theology thus abstracted with its left hand what it had conceded to heathen humanity with its right, and practically assumed the position of antagonism to a science of religion.

As we advance in the course of ecclesiastical history, we are confronted by a strange problem. On the one

Digitized by Google

hand, we find a growing intellectual tendency to approximate towards those forms of thought associated with the names of Plato and Aristotle; on the other hand, we find an increasing moral distance between the sympathies of Christianity and heathendom. The contradiction may be strikingly illustrated by one distinguished example, that of Augustine. No Christian writer has been more largely indebted to the results of heathen speculation, no theologian shows more evident traces of a tendency to blend the system of Christianity with the best fruits of pagan culture. The philosophic side of Augustine's theology, which is the side most valuable to a student, is in great measure the grafting of Platonism into the Christian vine. And yet this same Augustine, who finds so much to borrow from the intellectual treasures of heathendom, is of all men the most averse to the person of the heathens themselves, of all men the most despondent as to their ultimate possibilities and future destiny. He seems unwilling even to allow them the possession of natural gifts and graces; he declares that their virtues are only splendid vices. Is there any conceivable method in which we can account for this seeming inconsistency in the mind of a man who is perhaps even yet the greatest of systematic theologians? It seems to us that the explanation lies in the distinction drawn by the fathers between the image and the likeness of God (see Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, vol. ii. p. 96),—a distinction begun by

Digitized by Google

Tertullian, more distinctly defined by Augustine, and culminated by mediævalism. It was held that the image of God in which man was made, was the power of intellectual perception, that the likeness of God was the power of moral assimilation. When man fell from his state of purity, he lost the likeness but not the image; the likeness or moral element was supernatural, the image or rational element was natural. If we approach the subject with this distinction in view, we shall not find it difficult to explain how at one and the same moment the fathers could be affected towards heathendom by an influence of attraction and repulsion. We shall understand how, at the very moment when they regarded it as deprived of that divine likeness which they held to be supernatural, they should have sought in it for the remains of that divine image to which they still assigned a place in the natural creation, and should have accepted the pagan approximations to truth as the evidences of an original revelation which man at first received from the creative breath of God.

Augustine may be regarded as the point of transition to mediævalism. It is from him that mediævalism derives its celebrated dictum, 'Faith precedes the intellect.' There are, however, two opposite ways in which this dictum may be read. It may be understood to mean that because faith comes before reason, faith is more important than reason; or it may be taken to signify that as reason comes after faith, reason

Digitized by Google

is the goal of faith, and faith only the schoolmaster to prepare for the goal. In point of fact, both of these views were adopted by different phases of the mediæval mind. The Catholicism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was really divided into what now would be called a narrow and a broad Church. On the one side were the men who emphasized the precedence of faith; on the other side were the minds who exalted the claims of reason as the goal and completion of faith. The former was the more Romanising view, and the view which tended most to resist the progress of speculation; yet the latter might plausibly claim to represent the true conservative spirit, for it could point to a very clear foreshadowing of itself in the theological tenets of the school of Alexandria. These were the parties which, in counterbalancing each other, helped to balance the mediæval world, and contributed to preserve the golden mean between the sluggishness of inaction and the recklessness of revolutionary anarchy.

Morell has divided the religious history of heathenism into three epochs. The first period is that in which faith takes the pre-eminence over reason, extending from the days of Augustine to the age of Anselm. Then begins the second period, or the attempt to harmonize the dicta of faith with the conclusions of reason; this is the distinctively scholastic age. Lastly, we have the separation of faith and reason into two different spheres,—a separation carried

Digitized by Google

to such an extent by the latest mediævalism, that in some cases it was held that a thing might be philosophically true and theologically false (Morell's *Philosophy of Religion*). We must point out, however, that this final stage of mediæval supernaturalism had really its germ in the theology of Anselm. Anselm's theory of the atonement, while it was an attempt to harmonize the conclusions of faith and reason, had precisely the same effect upon the subsequent period as we have seen the Formula of Concord to have exerted upon the succeeding age of Protestantism, and it had that effect for precisely the same reason,—it placed God outside of law. Man was a debtor both to God's honour and to God's justice. The divine honour demanded the existence of a perfectly good man. But even should a perfectly good man be able to exist, the debt would still be unpaid; something must be done to expiate the fact that the honour of God had been so long unsatisfied. Accordingly the perfectly good man must do more than is expected of him; he must perform a work of supererogation, in order to satisfy God's justice as well as His honour. That work of supererogation is found in the fact of Christ's divine nature, which puts Him naturally above law, and makes the keeping of the law on his part a pure act of grace (*Cur Deus Homo*). With reference to this view, we have already subscribed to the opinion of Ritschl (see Note 2): a divine nature whose divinity consists in being above the sphere of law, and to

Digitized by Google

whom the observance of law is a work of supererogation, cannot be regarded in any other light than as a God who is supernatural in the sense of being unnatural. The theology of Anselm thus proved the unconscious means of preparing the way for that divorce of reason and faith which culminated in the mediæval age, and produced the reaction of the Reformation.

Note 4, Page 18.

The work of Lord Herbert from which the five points are taken, is the treatise *De Veritate.* For the publication of that work he has assigned a very remarkable reason. We quote the passage simply to show that the God of Lord Herbert of Cherbury was an immanent God, capable of special, even of supernatural, communion with His creatures, and therefore very far indeed removed from the extreme development of deism:—

'Being doubtful in my chamber, one fine day in summer, my casement being open towards the south, the sun shining clear, and no wind stirring, I took my book *De Veritate* in my hands, and kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words: "O Thou eternal God, author of this light which now shines upon me, and giver of all inward illuminations, I do beseech Thee of Thy infinite goodness to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make. I am not

Digitized by Google

satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book. If it be for Thy glory, I beseech Thee give me some sign from heaven; if not, I shall suppress it." I had no sooner spoke these words, but a loud though yet gentle noise came forth from the heavens, for it was like nothing on earth, which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem, I protest before the eternal God is true; neither am I in any way superstitiously deceived herein, since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but in the serenest sky I ever saw, being without all cloud, did, to my thinking, see the place from whence it came.'

Note 5, Page 33.

The ultimate authorities for the religion of India are the Vedas. The name is derived from a root signifying 'to know,' and is the same as that which reappears in the Greek and German verbs expressing knowledge, and in the Latin word *videre*, 'to see.' The Vedas consist of two parts, one earlier, the other later; the former is known by the name of Mantras, the latter by that of Brahmanas. The Mantras, or earlier portion, are poetical compositions consisting of a series of hymns and prayers. The word is derived from the root *man*, 'think;' and the idea evidently is, that the best road to the thought or knowledge of

Digitized by Google

God is that feeling of dependence implied in praise and prayer. We find here, on the threshold, a corroboration of the view taken in the text, that the earliest forms of Indian religion are those in which the spirit of man is impressed with its own nothingness, and that the earliest religious search of the Indian mind is the search for that principle of fatherhood which explains the origin of things. With reference to the Mantras, see Colebrook's *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. i. p. 308, and Müller's *Ancient Sanscrit Literature*, p. 343.

The Brahmanas are the prose portion. They are to the Mantras in some measure what the law is to the prophets in the Old Testament. They give regulations for the times and ways of observing the ritual, and seek to explain the origin of the rites themselves, constituting in this latter respect the germ of philosophic Brahminism. At the same time, it is worthy of remark that even in this germ of philosophic consciousness the sense of dependence still remains. It is nowhere more clearly seen than in the fact that the early Indian worship is unable to reach a moral standpoint. The rules which it observes are observed mechanically, and without any apparent perception that there is right in the nature of things. The moral consciousness, indeed, seems to have been untouched by the religious forms of this period,—a proof that man had not realized his superiority to the forces of nature. In support of

Digitized by Google

this statement, we quote the opinion of one who will not be suspected of religious narrowness or a want of intellectual sympathy with pre-Christian forms of faith. Professor Wilson says: 'Entire dependence upon Krishna, or any other favourite deity, not only obviates the necessity of virtue, but it sanctifies vice. Conduct is wholly immaterial. It matters not how atrocious a sinner a man may be, if he paints his face, his breast, his arms with certain sectarial marks, or, which is better, if he brands his skin permanently with them with a hot iron stamp; if he is constantly chanting hymns in honour of Vishnu, or, what is equally efficacious, if he spends hours in the simple reiteration of his name or names; if he die with the word Hari, or Ráma, or Krishna on his lips, and the thought of him in his mind, he may have lived a monster of iniquity,—he is certain of heaven' (*Essays and Lectures chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus*, vol. ii. p. 75, ed. London, 1862).

We do not wonder at such a picture. What Hegel says of China is also true of India,—where subjectivity is sunk, morality can only be discerned under the form of mechanical obedience to law. With Hegel, China and India are alike in this, that they both exhibit a state of the human soul in which man has not discovered the distinctive reality of his being as a force apart from nature, although in the case of India he recognises a progress towards this goal, and finds man emerging into the broken

Digitized by Google

and partial consciousness exhibited in a dream (see Hegel's *Philosophy of History*). It is not, of course, implied that this absence of the moral consciousness involves an absence of natural culture. On the contrary, it is manifest, from a study of the early Indian hymns, that the same men who were so dormant to the realities of the moral world, had acquired a very considerable knowledge of the practical arts of life (see Wilson's *Rigveda*). Nor is this wonderful. These men were in a state of sensuousness. Their minds were absorbed by the study of the external, and it is not surprising that they should have derived from that study some acquaintance with the powers and processes of the physical universe, and some facility in applying them to the practical wants of every day. The principle of fatherhood which they worshipped was, as we have seen in the text, the life underlying the objects of nature. At first that life was perceived as if it were broken up into many lives. In the earlier Vedas the objects of nature receive a separate worship, and each forms a distinct god. Agni is the fire of the sun, or lightning. Indra is the bright firmament. The Maruts are the winds. Surya is the sun. Ushas is the dawn. And as the object on which the eye of reverence fastens is material, the benefit expected from its worship is material also. Men have not yet learned to appreciate the value of a moral consciousness at peace with itself,

Digitized by Google

because they have not yet been awakened to the presence of a moral consciousness at all; they can only ask for what they know, and as yet they only know the advantage of being in harmony with life in its outward surroundings.

When we come to the Brahmanas, we find that the Indian worship has, in two respects, undergone a change from the aspect it exhibited in the poems. We see, for one thing, that the qualities ascribed to the gods begin to partake more of a moral character, —a fact which certainly indicates a dawning sense of superiority to the objects of physical nature. Not less clearly marked is the tendency towards the recognition of a gradation of rank in the celestial hierarchy. This fact points to the increasing desire of the human mind for one object of worship who shall be supreme over all others. It is probably from this idea of the celestial gradation that we are to date the origin of caste. There is no trace of this institution in the earliest books (see Wilson's *Rigveda*), and its omission seems to us another proof that the first Indian consciousness was that of absolute dependence; when man begins to separate his species into ranks, his sense of dependence is no longer absolute. The institution of caste marks a growing sense of importance, and the same sense of importance must be allowed to be implied in the attempt to regulate the rank of the gods.

In the Upanishads the tendency becomes yet

Digitized by Google

more marked towards unity of worship, for here the objects of nature begin to be represented rather as different symbols of the creative life than as themselves separate and independent deities, and this forms the real transition to Brahmanism proper. The essential idea of Brahmanism, at least in its earliest and purest period, is the identifying of creation with divine manifestation. We shall have occasion hereafter to recognise a later form; but the original idea of Brahmanism assuredly is, that out of the void the Lord of all manifests Himself, and that His manifestation is the natural universe. The universe is the birth of God in time. The process is effected through the medium of a golden egg, in which the temporal form of the divine life is produced. At the end of a definite time, the divine life, by a mere act of thought, cuts the egg asunder into two halves, and by the partition forms the distinction between the earth and sky (see Muir's *Original Sanscrit Texts*, vol. iv. p. 31). The division of nature into the earth and sky illustrates a very prevalent tendency of the Eastern mind to seek in the universe for both a paternal and a maternal principle,—for a masculine or active element, and a feminine or receptive element. Even the rigid unity embodied in the religion of the Chinese Confucius is forced in some measure to give way before this desire to find a twofold principle in the origination of the universe; and here, as in Brahmanism, we

Digitized by Google

behold the impersonal life splitting itself asunder into two separate existences, one constituting the heavens, the other the earth,—one forming the male, the other the female element of creation (see Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*, 2d ed. vol. ii. p. 30). From all this it is made manifest that the earliest search for God is the search for a principle of fatherhood. Man's first consciousness being a sense of dependence, he is forced to seek an origin for himself, and to name the object on which he depends. He finds that object in the life of nature, and he sees in the life of nature at once the fatherhood and the motherhood of the universe, the principle of action and the principle of receptivity, the power which gives and the power which receives.

Note 6, Page 45.

When we say that apotheosis, or the lifting of men up to the level of gods, does not, in our opinion, mark a very early stage of religious consciousness, we may seem to be at variance with so eminent an authority as Mr. Tyler, who places the germ of the doctrine in the tendency of savages to worship the souls of their ancestors (*Primitive Culture*). This indiscriminate ancestral worship, indeed, is by no means limited to savages. Real or fancied reference to it has been found in the Old Testament (see that curious book, Faber's *Many Mansions in the House*

Digitized by Google

of the Father, p. 55). It is, at all events, indisputable that it forms a constituent element in the worship of China. We must again point out, however, what we have stated in the text, that our aim is not to consider the religious nature of man in its germ, but rather in the full strength of its natural development. There is one great difference between this early ancestral worship and the subsequent doctrine of apotheosis. The former does not really proceed from a sense of the glory of humanity, nor even from a desire to glorify it; it is the product at once of human impotence and of human selfishness. The ancestral dead are supposed to fight the battles of their descendants, to contend for their rights in war, and to revenge the injuries inflicted by their enemies. We were struck by a remark reported to have been made by Principal Fairbairn of Bradford, in his second course of lectures on the Science of Religion, delivered at Edinburgh in 1880. In speaking of the ancestral worship of China, he said that the nation which was most solicitous about the immortality of its ancestors was the nation which of all others cared least for its own. The statement is certainly true, and it is also highly suggestive: it shows that a nation which worships its ancestors is not necessarily on that account in the enjoyment of an elevated sense of human dignity. In truth, this indiscriminate worship of ancestors proceeds from a different moral source to that which origin-

Digitized by Google

ates apotheosis: the former springs from the consciousness of dependence, the latter from the growth of human ambition.

The view we have taken in the text is in substantial agreement with that of Dorner. He recognises two kinds of incarnation in the pre-Christian world. In one of these, the lives of men are the manifestations of God; in the other, the life of the gods is a sublimation or apotheosis of the lives of men. He places the former in the East, the latter in the West, and therefore he virtually assigns to the latter a later origin. As representatives of the idea of incarnation, he prefers the Eastern manifestations to the Western apotheosis, yet he finds that the East failed to reach that idea after which it was groping; its manifestations of God in men were transient and evanescent, and were forced to end in the absorption of the individual. On the other hand, the doctrine of apotheosis, if it escaped the shadowy character of an Eastern manifestation, was equally far from realizing the Christian standard of incarnation, for the men whom it exalted into gods were circumscribed by their rival interests, by their nationality, and by the principle of fate which lay behind them (*History of the Development of the Doctrine of Christ's Person*, Introduction).

In excluding the idea of apotheosis altogether from the East, Dorner may seem to have overlooked that very remarkable phenomenon of Eastern religious life which appears in the later Brahmanism. Brahmanism

consists of two great philosophic epochs, which are known respectively as the Vedanta and the Sankhya system. The Vedanta system is that which we have already described as Brahmanism proper; in it both nature and humanity are the manifestations of a divine life. The Sankhya system may be roughly described as a direct reversal of the process; in it the divine life is the result of a development in the lives of nature and humanity. It is curious to observe how, in these respective systems, the two great forms of modern evolution are anticipated,—the one regarding the growth of this world as a process of the life of God, the other looking upon it as a process self-directed, though leading, it may be, to infinite issues. The Sankhya system makes matter the origin of all things, only it allows to matter an element of volition, which in process of time developes into the force of a divine intelligence. Yet we can hardly regard this as a representation of apotheosis; it is rather an apotheosis of nature than an apotheosis of humanity. If humanity is lifted up to the divine level, it is only so elevated as a part of nature. Man is but a fragment of the great physical whole; he has no independent being, he has no distinct individuality; and if he rises into the rank of a divine incarnation, it is only because he has first been absorbed in the mighty forces of the physical universe.

Thus far, then, the evidence is in favour of a Western origin of apotheosis. Gibbon practically takes

Digitized by Google

the same view, when he places the beginnings of this tendency in the worship of Alexander and his successors by Asiatic Greece (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* chap. iii.). We are disposed, indeed, to think that here, for the first time, the doctrine of human apotheosis takes a definite shape. There are certainly much earlier indications of its existence; but hitherto the heroes who are made divine are either fabulous or semi-fabulous, and one great secret of their apotheosis is their distance in the mists of antiquity. Here the heroes are flesh and blood,—men whose forms and whose failings are familiar to their fellow-men. As a general rule, it may be affirmed that the doctrine of apotheosis exhibits a constant development from the ideal to the real. It has its origin in the worship of imaginary human beings, such beings as humanity would like to be able to call real. It passes next into the intermediate phase between history and fable, and heightens with imaginary colouring those forms and acts of men which have really some foundation in fact. It then reaches the stage of the actual worship of humanity, and lifts into the rank of gods those who still survive in the memory of the living. Lastly, it pays divine honours to the living themselves, and in the reverence for Roman imperialism arrives at the final goal of earthly realism. From all this we conclude that the doctrine of apotheosis, however early may have been its beginnings, only reaches its definite and normal stage

Digitized by Google

of development in the period which followed the promulgation of the philosophy of Plato.

Note 7, Page 60.

The deistic, theistic, and pantheistic relations to the universe will all be found in Christianity; that is to say, if we take up different parts of the Christian system, and consider each in isolation from the other, we shall find prominence given to one or other of these elements. Of course, in point of fact, no such separation is possible, but it is possible to make it in thought. There are three categories under which the divine life may be contemplated,—the will of God, the kingdom of God, and the Spirit of God. Take these in separation from one another, and you will find that they suggest respectively the deistic, theistic, and pantheistic relation. The will of God, if considered in isolation from all other modes of His nature, will suggest the idea simply of a supramundane power, whose essence consists in its exaltation above all the relations of things; this is really the view of Deism. The kingdom of God, if considered in isolation from all other modes of His being, will suggest essentially the element of law, the conception of a deity whose main prerogative is His sovereignty over the lives of His creatures; this is the distinctive standpoint of Theism. The Spirit of God, if considered in isolation from all other modes of His work-

Digitized by Google

ing, will suggest the presence of a divine power within the soul, and of a divine life inseparable from that order of life which subsists throughout the universe; this is essentially the standpoint of Pantheism. In point of fact, Christianity does not isolate these conceptions; it unites them into one consistent whole, and by the exhibition of their union it proves that they are not contradictory conceptions, but phases of human thought which only need a larger thought to join them. It reveals to us a Being of omnipotent power, whose will is untrammelled by the conditions of earth and time. It reveals to us a Being of universal sovereignty, who has consented, as the King of the universe, to enter into earthly and temporal relations. It reveals to us a Being who has Himself become a portion of that world which He governs, and who, in the presence of an all-diffusive Spirit, has caused all spheres of thought to live, and move, and have their being in Him. Christianity has thus here, as ever, conquered the systems of nature, not by rejection, but by incorporation; and has solved the discrepancies of the natural reason, by gathering its seemingly opposite conclusions into one great scheme of concord and harmony.

Note 8, Page 78.

The idea of membership in a divine body, though not met with outside the Christian age, is indeed

Digitized by Google

found in that age outside the Christian circle; we meet with it among the later Stoics. The early Church was much exercised to explain the many resemblances between the teaching of Christianity and the teaching of the contemporaneous philosophy, and it endeavoured to account for the similarity by the supposition that the leaders of the great philosophic schools had been accidentally brought within the range of Christian intercourse. Philo was supposed to have come into contact with Peter, Seneca to have been brought into companionship with Paul (Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*, vol. i. p. 277, T. T. F. L.). The view, as Keim points out, is of course untenable; nor is the modern spirit anxious to retain it. We are no longer eager to find an origin for every natural good in the historical manifestation of Christianity; rather do we expect to find that the light which lighteth every man shall have communicated to diverse systems something of its own unity. Christianity claims to be the light of the world previous to its historical manifestation; and if its claim be well founded, we need not be surprised to discover that at the time of its appearance there was a common life in the air. Gibbon should have added a sixth secondary cause for the propagation of Christianity, —the comparative culture of the Gentile nations. The heathendom of that day was much nearer to the divine life than the heathendom of ours, and on that account it was much nearer to the reception and

Digitized by Google

appreciation of that truth which appeals to all that is highest in human nature.

Nevertheless a little reflection will make it evident that the idea of divine membership entertained by the later Stoics, is essentially different from that idea which was diffused by Christianity. The whole question centres round one point,—What is that body in which the membership is constituted? Now the general standpoint of the later Stoicism may be indicated in one word—Hylozoism; that is to say, the belief that the material universe is to the divine life what the body is to the soul. Matter is regarded as the embodiment of God. The divine embodiment is thus not a human organism; it is the entire framework of physical nature. To have a membership in the divine body is simply to be a part of the universal framework. Men have undoubtedly such a membership, but they have it, not because they are men, but because they possess material forms, and they share it in common with all the objects of nature. Human beings in this system are members of the divine body as parts of that stupendous physical whole which itself constitutes the embodiment. The Christian conception is in one respect the reverse. Here humanity is the primary organism, and nature obtains a share in the organic life simply through its contact with humanity. This thought seems clearly implied by Paul, when he declares that in the redemption of the human soul the creation

Digitized by Google

itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The physical universe is here made to play a subordinate part in the process: it no longer constitutes the whole of which humanity is a fragment; it is itself the fragment of which humanity is the whole, and its entire hope of emancipation lies in the emancipation of the human organism. Christianity is thus different in its standpoint from the philosophy which was contemporaneous with its birth. In our opinion, the student of Scripture who wants to find a secular parallel to the Christian idea of divine membership, will discover a more effectual one in the philosophy of Auguste Comte than in the system of the later Stoics, for with Comte humanity is itself an organism. It is true he wrote unconsciously under the influence of a Christian atmosphere, yet we cannot but deem it a significant circumstance, that the pioneer of modern positive science should have seen fit to incorporate with his system a travesty of that conception which belongs essentially to the Pauline theology.

While, however, we thus disclaim any real parallel between Paulinism and later Stoicism, we willingly bear our testimony to the high intellectual aspirations which the philosophy of the later Stoics in many parts exhibits, and to the sincere and fervent piety which in some instances, and pre-eminently in the case of Epictetus, the lives of its disciples have

Digitized by Google

evinced. The student will find a very clear and a very popular account of the leaders of that philosophy in Canon Farrar's *Seekers after God.*

Note 9, Page 81.

The passage is of course Phil. ii. 6–8. The student of Scripture who carefully considers that passage will find in it, as it seems to us, what from the human side may be called an anti-climax, a ladder of divine humiliations, descending from the great to the less, from the less to the little. It begins with the form of God, the pre-existent glory of the Son of man. It then proceeds to exhibit that process of kenosis by which the divine life emptied out its glory. The first descending step of His humiliation is the assumption of a servant's form, by which, perhaps, the apostle means to refer to that angelic ministration or mediation in the Old Testament, of which the second person of the Trinity is made by Christian theology the most prominent agent. Then we have the transition to a yet lower step: He passes from the likeness of the ministrant angel to the likeness of the human. Coming down further still, we find Him not only assuming the likeness but the fashion of humanity, adapting Himself to the shifting modes through which an individual existence is bound to pass. But the humiliation is not yet completed: He not only assumes the fleeting stages of life, but He

Digitized by Google

assumes each stage in its lowest sphere: 'He humbled Himself.' The crowning form of this humbling is His submission to the laws of humanity: 'He became obedient;' the crowning form of His obedience is its endurance 'unto death;' the crowning proof of His power to endure death is His submission to it in its meanest guise, 'even the death of the cross.' Here is a ladder of condescensions stretching down from heaven to earth,—the form of God, the form of a servant, the likeness of a man, the fashion of a man, the humility of a man, the obedience of a man, the obedience unto death, the death of the cross. We have in the text taken this ladder of humiliations as expressing unitedly the completed fact of incarnation. We have looked upon the incarnation as a gradual historical process, by which the Son of God became ever increasingly the Son of man, added stage by stage to the spheres of His human consciousness, and thereby added step by step to the ladder of His humiliation, until at last His human consciousness was crowned in His utmost humility,—His obedience unto the cross.

Note 10, Page 95.

The pessimism of Buddha ought not to be viewed as an isolated phenomenon, occupying a unique place in history; it was in great measure a reaction against the immediately preceding stage of Indian life, and

Digitized by Google

as such it is easily reducible to a natural law of human development. There would have been no Buddhism had there not been a preceding Sankhya system. Buddhism has the same relation to the Sankhya system which the French Revolution has to the age of Louis XVI.,—the relation of reactionary revolt. The Sankhya system had within it three elements against which Buddhism was the reaction,—a principle of self-life, a materialistic idea of God, and a mundane conception of immortality. Its principle of self-life found expression in the reverence for caste; in this the pride of the individual asserted itself in the worst form. To the idea of caste Buddhism opposed the thought of a universal brotherhood, and in this respect it occupied a somewhat analogous position to that which the Lutheran movement afterwards exhibited in its struggle with the Roman hierarchy. The God of the Sankhya system was, as we have seen, little better than a material principle,—a certain power of volition which was supposed to reside in elemental nature. To this God the Buddhist opposed Atheism. He was unable to see the use of a deity who was devoid of intelligence, and incapable of conscious sympathy; and as he was not himself yet capable of framing a more spiritual conception, he very naturally fell back upon negation, and refused to recognise a God whom he could not esteem. 'The immortality of the Sankhya system was but the transmigration from one mundane sphere

Digitized by Google

into another, repeated through an endless succession of births and deaths. Of these future spheres of existence the Buddhist naturally judged by the present sphere. He had found the present scene to be governed by a principle of self-life, and he had found the principle of self-life to be something which made existence valueless. Was it not inevitable he should come to the conclusion that the immortality of the soul ought not to the good man to be an object of desire, and that the consummation most 'devoutly to be wished' was the end of all things. Buddhism was thus on every side a system of re-action. Every system of reaction is in one aspect pessimistic,—it regards the state of things against which it rebels as the representation of the worst possible world. The peculiarity of the Buddhist pessimism lies in this, that it had no new state to propose as a substitute for the old one. Unlike the general tendency of revolutions, it did not seek to dethrone an ancient empire that it might set up a new republic; its aim ended with the act of de-thronement. It was convinced that the reigning government was bad, but it had no better form of government to suggest in its room; it felt that its mission would be accomplished when the former things had been swept away.

Our knowledge of Buddhism dates chiefly from modern times; previous to the publication of Burnouf's introduction to its history, the facts

Digitized by Google

regarding it were very little known. The word Buddhist is derived from *Budh*, 'to know,' and is defined by Wilson, 'he to whom truth is known.' Wilson leans to the belief that Buddha is not the name of a real historical man, but the designation of a school of thought,—a view, however, in which he is not supported by the majority of Orientalists. That much of the history of Buddha is mythical and legendary, needs no demonstration, but the fact remains that the Buddhist religion centres round a personality. Almost in contradiction to its antagonism to individualism, the Buddhist has identified his religious aspiration with the aspiration to reach the life of one whom he believes to have actually lived on earth; and it is highly unlikely that, had there been no historical ground for this assumption, he would have so far departed from his natural philosophic tendency as to have deliberately invented the idea. In so far as it centres round a person, Buddhism is of all ancient religions that which comes nearest to Christianity. Buddha, indeed, is himself recognised as an incarnation. It must, however, always be remembered that what is called an incarnation is here really an elevation of being. It is not that descent of God into humanity which the Christian religion proclaims, it is rather the ascent into humanity of an inferior material principle. It is, so to speak, a process of God-creation, by which matter becomes conscious, intelligent, divine; whereby

Digitized by Google

the blind element of will, which the later Brahmanism has located in physical nature, passes into an element of personality, and ripens into the attributes of divinity.

The goal of the Buddhist pessimism is Nirvana. The word is derived from *Nir*, 'out,' and *Vana*, 'blown.' It is commonly taken to signify the extinction of the soul. Max Müller, indeed, and a few Orientalists, have taken another view. Müller makes Nirvana the name for that state of rest which the purified soul is to enjoy when emancipated from its earthly transmigrations, a place where the winds never blow and the storms never roar. There is this much in favour of the supposition, that men during life are sometimes said to have already entered the Nirvana—a fact which seems inconsistent with the notion that Nirvana is annihilation; this language, however, must be interpreted figuratively. No doubt, if the Buddhist could have conceived any higher form of life than the sensuous and selfish one in which he dwelt, he would have welcomed it as the true rest of the soul; we cannot believe that he loved annihilation for its own sake. But he thought annihilation better than the present state, and he knew of no state higher than the present. There seems to be a strong analogy between his denial of immortality and his denial of God. It is generally believed that the creed of the Buddhist was Atheism. This view is prominently advanced by Saint-Hilaire

Digitized by Google

(*Le Bouddha et sa Religion*). They did not, he says, so much deny that there was a God, as take for granted that there was none. Professor Flint, on the other hand, while he admits that Buddhism logically led to Atheism, denies that practically it had no divine worship (*Anti-Theistic Theories*). In favour of this view, there is the undoubted fact that Buddha is himself an incarnation. Hegel is here, as everywhere else, thoroughly characteristic, making as it were a creed out of the negation of worship. Buddhism, in his system, represents humanity arriving at the consciousness of its own divinity, and on that account rejecting alike the natural or material and the supernatural or supramundane objects of worship (*Philosophy of History*). Müller regards the Buddhist Atheism as simply a reaction against the belief in those divinities whom the Indian mind had outgrown (*Contemporary Review*, November 1878). In this last view appears the analogy between the Buddhist denial of God and the Buddhist denial of the future life. Both denials are built upon the fact that the intelligence of the Indian mind has outgrown its past ideals. It has got beyond its former objects of worship, and it has become dissatisfied with its present objects of pursuit; but as it has not yet found a fitting substitute for these, it is obliged to content itself with simply sweeping them away.

See Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, Saint-Hilaire's

Digitized by Google

Le Bouddha et sa Religion, Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters,* Hegel's *Philosophy of History,* Flint's *Anti-Theistic Theories,* and the little book of Dr. Marcus Dods, *Mohammed, Buddha, and Christ.*

Note 11, Page 99.

The crowning merit of Platonism as an ethical system, is the connection which it seeks to establish between individual virtue and social well-being. Virtue in this system is made the foundation of the very existence of society (see *Republic,* Book 1, translated by Davis and Vaughan). Hence, as Baron Bunsen says, the republic of Plato is a church rather than a state. In this government, as in the Jewish theocracy and in the conception of the earthly kingdom of Christ, the secular is made to depend on the sacred, the life of the community subsists by obedience to the divine life. Virtue is by its very nature a source of social union, vice is by its very nature an element of social disorganization. Vice is disintegration. It is that process by which the individual retires within himself, in order to live for himself. Disintegration is death; it only takes place when the bond of life which united the members has been withdrawn. In the system of Plato sin is thus almost identified with death. It is not surprising that the speculative fathers of the second century should have fastened eagerly on this analogy between the conclusions of

Digitized by Google

heathen philosophy and the doctrine of the Old Testament. In the Eastern Church there is observed a constant tendency to explain the story of the fall after a Platonic manner. Adam is the principle of reason, which in itself is strong and godlike. Eve is the principle of sense-affection, which diverts the power of reason from its legitimate sphere. Reason, by yielding to sense, loses its divine strength, and becomes the slave of the material element (see Clemens Alex., *Stromata*, 174). In accordance with the same spirit, Origen treats the narrative of the fall as allegorical. Men have sinned in a previous state of existence, and in this life they are punished for that sin. The punishment consists in incorporation. As a retribution for their misdeeds in the pre-existent state, men are clothed in human bodies, and are thus imprisoned and fettered; it is this which the Book of Genesis intends to portray, through the allegorical statement that when our first parents lost their innocence God clothed them in coats of skin. According to this view of Origen, matter is thus the penalty of sin; it is not so much in itself the principle of evil, as the inevitable consequence which flows from the principle of evil. However abortive these attempts may have been to find an absolute unity of thought between the Dialogues of Plato and the Book of Genesis, it must certainly be esteemed a matter worthy of consideration, that a historical narrative, professedly so early in time, and unmis-

Digitized by Google

takeably so primitive in style, should yet have been deemed susceptible of a union with the highest and grandest results of heathen speculation.

But of all the fathers the most Platonic is Augustine. His Platonism was the result partly of nature and partly of education; and the strongest proof of the hold it had over him, is the fact that even his conversion to Christianity could not shake it off. Unlike Origen, he goes to the root of the matter. He is not so much in search of sin's consequence, as of sin itself. He wants to find out the source of that moral evil which he believes to be a greater punishment than all its consequences. In making this search, his mind instinctively travels on Platonic lines of thought. Plato had placed the principle of evil in matter, and he had regarded matter itself as the element of death or negation; sin was here virtually made a negative element. Augustine adopted this view, but added to it a thought which Christianized it. Death is in the first instance negation; it is simply the withdrawal of life, the absence of that which made the being think and move. But no sooner is the life withdrawn, than death becomes a positive element; corruption sets in when vitality departs. The negative state passes into a positive process, which reveals its character by the disintegration of the body. Sin, like physical death, is in the first instance a negative state; it is simply the separation of the soul

Digitized by Google

from that life of God which constituted its source of virtue. But the instant the separation is complete, sin ceases to be a negative state; it becomes, like physical death, a positive source of corruption. The man who has ceased to be good,—in other words, who has separated himself from the life and power of virtue,—becomes thenceforth the victim of a new life and of a new power. On this account Augustine would distinguish between negation and privation. Negation is the absence of that which never belonged to an object; privation is the absence of that which did belong to an object, but which it has lost. A stone and a corpse are both in a state of death, but they are not both dead in the same way; to the former death is negation—to the latter, privation. The stone wants that which it never had; the corpse wants that which it ought to have. Augustine therefore would say not so much that sin is a state of negation, as that it is a state of privation. Privation always involves a positive element; it is something foreign to the object, and therefore it introduces into its nature a discordant power. Sin, by separating man from God, has exposed man to the influence of a life of corruption, of dismemberment, of decay.

It will be evident, then, that the theological student cannot master the patristic literature without having in the process acquired some knowledge of the Platonic spirit. At one period of his life Augustine studied the Scriptures as a preparation for

Digitized by Google

Platonism; a course somewhat analogous might still be recommended to the student of philosophy. If he would understand Platonism, he cannot do better than begin with it in those aspects in which it is most contiguous to the Christian consciousness, and he will best find those aspects by an intelligent perusal of the works of the Eastern fathers. If, however, he is desirous to approach the subject from a purely philosophical point of view, we would recommend him to consult Professor Jowett's translation of *Plato's Dialogues*, Archer Butler's *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. ii., and Grote's *Plato and the other Companions of Socrates.*

Note 12, Page 103.

Hegel's view of the historical development of Parsism seems to be this. There are three periods in its history. The first comprehends the worship of the Zend people; it is that phase of the religious life of man in which the human spirit awakens to the sharp separation between good and evil, under the symbols of light and darkness. The second stage is the Chaldæan worship, in which the spiritual separation is corrupted into a sensuous or physical one, and men cease to regard the light as merely symbolic, but reverence it as itself the essence of purity. The last stage is that in which an attempt is made to reconcile the principle of light and the principle of

Digitized by Google

darkness, illustrated by the worship of the dead Adonis in Syria, and by the reverence for the weeping Isis in Egypt (*Philosophy of History*).

Parsism is thus a dualism, yet there is clearly a development in its dualism. The evil principle of its later stage is more powerful than the evil principle of its first period. It is not difficult to see that, at the time when the religion first breaks upon our view, Ormuzd has the pre-eminence over Ahriman, and evil is rather the disturbance to the reign of goodness than any positive power to initiate a new reign. Nay, it is evident that even this partial dualism was itself the outgrowth of an original unity. There is every reason to believe that the two principles of Parsism were at first one principle, the separation of an impersonal essence which was supposed to underlie the universe. Parsism, in fact, seems to have been only another phase of that development which took its rise from Brahmanism. We have seen how the original unity of the philosophic worship of India broke up into the popular recognition of two distinct principles, the one male and the other female. We see here a precisely analogous process, with this one difference, that the essence which in Brahmanism was separated into a male and female principle, was separated in Parsism into a good and bad principle. Who does not see that the germ of the latter is already given in the former? The male element is recognised as the better, because the stronger power; and it

Digitized by Google

requires no prophet to predict that the principles which as yet differ only in degrees of excellence, shall eventually come to be separated by that line of demarcation which divides good from evil.

In Egypt we see both the earlier and later form,—the former in Isis, the latter in Seth. Isis represents the female principle of nature; she is the bride of the sun-god Osiris, and weeps when he goes down. Seth represents what may be called the dark shade of nature; he is conceived as the principle of darkness, and therefore as the antagonist of light and purity. Here, in the same nation, in the same religion, and at the same time, we find existing side by side two phases of civilisation, the one representing the culture of the hour, the other the survival of an older culture. It is impossible, however, to close our eyes to the fact that Egypt is ever striving to outleap both civilisations, to surmount the antagonisms of nature, and to reach again the unity of all things. In the true spirit of Parsism, she is indeed impressed with the belief that nature is in struggle, but, in addition to this belief, there is an underlying hope that the struggle will not be eternal. This hope is powerfully evinced in the successive phases of Egyptian development, by which the nation passes from the worship of the star to the worship of the animal, and from the worship of the animal to the adoration of that mysterious Sphynx, which adds to the animal life the incipient life of humanity. In that development

Digitized by Google

we see the deliberate tendency of the Egyptian mind to vanquish the dualisms of the universe, and restore it to its primitive oneness. The animal life first obtains its legitimate ascendency over material things, even where that materialism is represented by the glory of the starry heavens. At last there begins to dawn the conviction of the legitimate empire of a human soul; the animal life itself ceases to enjoy the highest adoration, and the time is already prefigured when humanity itself shall awake into the sense of a divine enthusiasm, and the consciousness of a divine mission.

Note 13, Page 110.

It has been a frequent subject of dispute whether the Logos of Philo is to be regarded as personal or impersonal. Dorner holds decidedly the latter view. While admitting, as every one must admit, the strong parallelism between the attributes he applies to his principle of mediation, and the attributes which the Fourth Gospel applies to the divine word, he still regards the use of such expressions in Philo as merely figurative and symbolical. He recognises four senses in which Philo makes use of the word Logos. He sometimes employs it to designate a divine power or faculty, sometimes to mark the divine power or faculty in the act of constructing the idea of the world, sometimes to describe the completion of the

Digitized by Google

ideal world in the thought of God, and sometimes to indicate the process of transition by which the ideal world passes into the actual (see Dorner's *History of the Development of the Doctrine of Christ's Person*, Introd. pp. 26–42, 2d edit., Stuttgart 1845). Dr. Abbot, on the other hand, seems rather to lean towards the view that the Logos of Philo contained a personal element (see article 'Gospels,' *Encyc. Brit.*). So we think does Keim (*Jesu von Nazara*, vol. i. p. 287, T.T.F.L.). It seems to us, indeed, that the two views are not necessarily opposite. The distinction between the personal and the impersonal is less distinctly marked in ancient than in modern times. In the Platonic type of thought especially, it is very difficult to draw the line between an idea and a person, and for this reason, that every idea is a potential person, and every person is a concealed idea. In the Platonic philosophy, the beings who are now flesh and blood were originally ideal essences, and will only fulfil their destiny by becoming ideal essences again. Platonism here simply gives expression to a tendency which has already been implied in the previous systems of the East. The divine life of Brahmanism is both personal and impersonal, but it is impersonal before it becomes personal; and it will be impersonal after it has ceased to be personal. The divine principle of the Sankhya system is essentially, as we have seen, the apotheosis of Materialism, or, in other words, the elevation into a divine personality of

Digitized by Google

that which originally is devoid of personality. The founder of the Buddhist religion is himself regarded as a divine incarnation, although the religion which he has founded is, strictly speaking, atheistic; the reason is that, in accordance with the Eastern mode of thought, it is perfectly conceivable that a divine personality may arise from the combination and growth of elements which in their origin do not transcend the limits of inanimate nature. Brute matter is here a potential fetich, something which may in the process of time and development give birth to a being who shall be worthy of religious reverence. From all this it is clear that the question whether a divine being is personal or impersonal, loses in ancient philosophy much of its point and significance. It will in general be perfectly possible to maintain, and to maintain successfully, either the one or the other side of the question. In dealing with such a subject in ancient philosophy, the crucial point of inquiry perhaps would be, not whether any particular deity were personal or impersonal, but whether its personality or its impersonality were the earliest manifestation. Christian apologists have been afraid to allow that into Philo's conception there could have entered the personal element; it has seemed to them that such an admission would destroy the distinction between his Logos and the Logos of Christianity. It would not destroy that distinction. However personal the Logos of Philo

Digitized by Google

may be, he must still always be an ideal person; no place has yet been found for him in the order and the development of history. The Logos of Christianity, on the other hand, is not simply personal, but professedly historical. That profession, indeed, is one of the things to be established; it cannot at the outset be taken for granted. Yet it is from the outset an undeniable fact that Christianity has secured for itself a place in the very centre of this world's historical movement. Looked at even from the most secular side, and estimated even by the lowest computation, it has become one of the greatest forces in the development of the human mind, and one of the strongest factors in the social and political life of modern Europe. In this respect alone it occupies, and must ever continue to occupy, a position essentially different from that which is held by the ideal speculations of Philo. Even were it conceded that the Logos of Philo stood on the same ideal level with the Logos of Christianity, the fact would still remain, that while the former has proved an idea and nothing more, the latter has proved an idea which has diverted the stream of the ages.

The Logos of Philo has, however, one great claim on the interest of the theological student; it may be said to be the earliest attempt on record to construct a science of religion. In accordance with the spirit of such an attempt, it proceeds on a basis of eclecticism. Philo lived in an atmosphere of two intel-

Digitized by Google

lectual extremes. He had to contend, on the one hand, with the distant God of Judaism, so distant as to preclude any real communication. He had to struggle, on the other, with the near gods of Greece, so near as to prevent any reverence from entering the heart of the worshipper. Between these extremes he attempted a compromise. He held as decidedly as any Jew that God was incapable of communicating Himself. The God of Philo is the Jehovah of the later Judaism, who to the idea of a spatial distance has added the conception of an intellectual gulf of separation; He is a God whose nature is so essentially different from the human, that no representation of Him can be given to a human soul. Yet, inconsistent as it may seem, Philo has been unwilling to stop here; he has been attracted towards that very element of Hellenism which is naturally so alien to the Jewish conception. In defiance of his fundamental idea of God, he has sought to establish a bridge of communication between the infinite and the finite, to find a point of union in which the divine thought may meet with the human thought; this medium of communication is the Logos.

The term Logos literally means that which is spoken, and subsequently it comes to mean all those powers of the mind of which rational speech is the manifestation. The Logos, or 'word,' is thus the medium by which one mind reveals itself to another. Probably the ancient philosophers had in view the

Digitized by Google

fact that a word is the most direct and perfect mode of revelation which can subsist between two beings. Both the look and the action are liable to misinterpretation, but the word can only deceive when the man who speaks it wills to deceive,—in other words, when he refuses to make it a medium for revealing truth. A word, then, even between man and man, is the surest medium of revelation, and so was taken to represent the most direct intercourse which man could have with God. But there are distinguishable two stages in the existence of a word. A word exists at the moment in which it is spoken; but, as Tertullian points out, it has had an existence previous to that. As nearly as we can remember, his expression is this: 'That which thou thinkest becometh a word in thee.' He means to say that we can only think in words; that no thought can arise in the mind without being immediately associated with the name which is commonly applied to it. It is only by marking this human analogy that we shall be able to appreciate the patristic distinction between the outer and the inner Logos. In the first period of dogmatic theology, Christ was viewed rather as the spoken than as the speaking word; in other words, He was contemplated more in His earthly relations than in His state of pre-existence. Towards the close of the second century, however, and particularly with Clemens Alexandrinus, we find a reaction from this external view. The word from this time is more frequently contem-

Digitized by Google

plated as it existed in the thought of God previous to having received any outward utterance. In this inner sense the word is really equivalent to the thought or reason of God; it is the form in which the divine mind represents to itself that revelation which it is about to make to the world. The foreshadowing of this inner and outer Logos will certainly be found in the conception of the Alexandrian Philo; it is really implied in the distinction pointed out by Dorner between the word as a divine faculty and the word as a process of creation.

Note 14, Page 120.

The passage we have quoted from St. Paul is one of the many scriptural utterances in which Christianity seems to make an approach to the pantheistic standpoint. To say that a man becomes a new creature, appears tantamount to saying that he has lost his old individuality. A little further on in the text we have used an illustration which may seem to confirm such an impression; we have compared the incorporation of the individual in Christ, to the submergence of the river in the sea. Now it is quite true that when the river flows into the sea it loses its corruptions, but it is also true that in the very act of losing its corruptions it ceases to be a river; its individuality passes away, its form vanishes, it becomes one with the ocean. It is clear that in

Digitized by Google

the use of this illustration we have not intended to suggest any such analogy, but have simply designed to convey an image of the process by which the corruptions of the individual soul may be washed away by its union with a new and higher life. Where the analogy breaks down, is precisely in that point in which the material differs from the spiritual. When one material object is incorporated with another material object, it thereby loses its individuality; the river by its submergence in the sea becomes the sea. But it is far otherwise with the world of mind. When a weak soul surrenders itself to the love, to the influence, and to the life of a strong soul, it may be said to gain its individuality, to receive into its nature a fresh influx of power. This is manifestly the thought which Christianity has in view in such expressions as: 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.' The idea evidently is, that the spiritual absorption which Christianity effects is one by which new force and energy are given to the individual soul. It is perhaps on this account that the metaphor of the river and the ocean is not the metaphor employed by Scripture to describe the union of the soul with Christ. It figures largely in our modern hymnals; it has been expressed with great beauty by Keble, where he speaks of losing himself in the ocean of God's love; but it is not the favoured simile of Scripture. The favoured Scripture simile is that of

Digitized by Google

the head and the members of a human body. The idea in the mind of Paul seems to have been that of transferring into a new body a hand which had been stained with crime. The problem in his contemplation appears to have been, how to express the fact of the soul's liberation from its past corruption, without in the very act of that expression destroying the personality of the soul itself. The river running into the ocean would have satisfied the first condition, but would have failed to meet the second; it would have symbolized the washing away of corruption, but would have seemed to purchase that boon at the price of individual annihilation. The figure of a human body presented itself to St. Paul in a more favourable light; it appeared to meet both requirements. The hand stained with crime, if grafted into the membership of a new body, would lose at once its past association and its past character, while yet at the same time it would retain its individual form, and keep the stamp of its personality. This we believe to have been the process of reasoning which led the Christian apostle to make choice of that figure which has since become the inalienable property of the Christian consciousness. It must be confessed that, of all the metaphors which have been employed to describe the fact of redemption, it is the most comprehensive and the most expressive, covering the largest ground, and admitting within its boundaries the greatest number of divergent views.

Digitized by Google

In this figure, then, of the head and the members, if on one side we see an apparent approach of Christianity towards the pantheistic standpoint, we are confronted on the other by an altogether contrary attitude. At the moment when it seems to touch the threshold of Pantheism, Christianity, here as ever, draws back and asserts the claims of the individual life. The sin-laden soul is taken up to be incorporated in a pure personality, but in the process of incorporation its substance is not destroyed; it retains its individuality as a member of the new body. Perhaps, indeed, this is the place to indicate what seems to us to be the crucial and final point of difference between Christian Pantheism and other kinds of Pantheism. The idea underlying all pre-Christian pantheistic forms is the belief that the soul at death will regain that union with the divine life of which its birth into the world has deprived it. The life of this world is looked upon as an interruption and a disturbance of the divine life, and the end of this world's life is regarded as the restitution of all things; the individual returns to the bosom of God by that act of death which is supposed to deprive him of his individuality. Now the Christian notion of union with God is diametrically opposed to this. This union is not something which requires to wait until the soul shall be separated from the body; it is a process which must be initiated while the soul is united to the body. In Christianity, as in Pantheism,

Digitized by Google

a man may be said to be united to God, as where Paul strikingly affirms: 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' But the point to be remarked here is that Paul is applying this language to living men, men still in the earthly body, and still actively engaged in the earthly life. It is clear, therefore, on the surface, that in his view the absorption of the soul in God is not a process incompatible with the soul's retention of its human embodiment and earthly occupation. The Pauline thought is, that men in the very act of performing their earthly callings may be leading a hidden life, which is as great a secret to the eye of the outward world as is the life beyond death. The hidden lives of these men, the apostle declares to be in precisely the same relation to the world as the lives of the departed dead; it sees them not, it knows them not. They are already members of a new commonwealth, citizens of a new country, inhabitants of a new sphere. Yet these men have not lost their earthly personality, not even their earthly name. At the very moment when their inner life is hidden, their outer life is manifest to the eyes of all, and receives a more powerful manifestation from the new and unseen well-spring. This is a death in the midst of life, and a life in the midst of death. It is a surrender of the soul to God which does not destroy the soul, a Pantheism which enhances the individual, an entrance into heaven which opens a more direct door to earth.

Digitized by Google

NOTE 15, PAGE 163.

It ought not to be overlooked that, considered even as an individual phenomenon,—in other words, viewed even in its relation to the purely animal wants,—there has been found for physical pain a great and unmistakeable use in the economy of this world. It has been found to serve the purpose of a signboard of warning. The popular notion is, that the reason why fire is hurtful to a human body, is its power to torture it with physical pain. The truth is, the physical torture is a warning that the fire possesses a destructive property. If we could imagine a man deprived of the sense of pain, as he may be deprived of some of the other senses, he would not thereby be rendered less vulnerable than other men; in reality he would be more vulnerable. The difference between him and other men would be, that while they possessed a monitor to warn them of danger, he was left in such a position that any member of his body might be subjected to a process of injury without his being able to perceive it until too late for remedy. The fire would burn whether we felt it or not; the feeling is the messenger that warns us to avoid the peril.

It may seem strange that we have not assigned to this theory a place amongst those attempts to explain suffering which we have examined in this lecture. Our reason for the omission was that this view appeared

Digitized by Google

to us simply a modification of that theory which accounted for suffering by making it the penalty of a violated law. The only difference between them is that while the theory in the text contemplates suffering as the penalty of a violated *moral* law, the view here exhibited contemplates it as the penalty of a violated *natural* one. There is, of course, the additional fact that in this latter view the penalty is regarded not as an end, but as the means to an end. If the hand is brought into contact with the fire, it is scorched, and the scorching is the penalty of attempting to combine elements which do not admit of union. But it is at the same time more than a penalty: it is a warning; it tells the man that he will consult his own comfort by avoiding contact with that element for the future. With these modifications, however, the view under consideration must be regarded as essentially the same in principle as that which occupies the third place in the theories of the text.

A more important question is, What is the precise value of this theory? does it solve the mystery of pain? does it go any way in solving it? That it goes some way is indisputable. We are continually made aware that without it we would stand in greater jeopardy every hour; that life would be more dangerous, and that death would be more imminent. All this we must concede, and in the concession we virtually find for pain a place in the natural economy of providence, as the beacon which warns the mariner to avoid

Digitized by Google

danger. But it is one thing to find a place for a theory, it is another thing to say that a theory has solved a problem. This view of suffering goes some way, but it leaves an immense way untraversed. It accounts for many cases, but it leaves a vast number of cases unaccounted for. It becomes less applicable the further we ascend in the scale of being, and the more we advance from the natural into the moral sphere. The instinct of the animal is self-preservation, and the presence of pain assuredly helps that instinct, —it enables the animal to avoid danger. But it cannot be said that the instinct of the moral being is self-preservation, nor can it be affirmed that it is always the duty of the moral being to avoid danger; there are many instances in which the contrary may be maintained. In Christian ethics, although it is distinctly held that the individual gains himself by losing himself, it is not less distinctly asserted that the gain of himself must not be his object, that his immediate object must be the good of some other being, and that his self-preservation must be reached in the very act of self-forgetfulness. In the view of such a principle as this, it cannot with any propriety be said that the avoidance of danger is to the moral man a paramount duty. He must be prepared first and foremost to seek the welfare of humanity, and experience has amply proved that to seek the welfare of humanity is not to tread a path of roses. It is essentially a strait gate and a narrow way, a road

Digitized by Google

beset with difficulties, a journey strewn with thorns. Humanity in the mass is not anxious for its true welfare; and for him who seeks to deliver it, it not uncommonly prepares a crown of thorns. The moral benefactor of mankind has in all ages been subjected to a species of martyrdom, and he has in general undertaken his mission in the full consciousness that such a fate awaits him. If the consciousness of such a fate induced him to avoid his mission, he would thereby sink in the moral scale. Experience warns him of his danger, but it is no longer his duty to avoid the danger, for he is no longer meeting the world simply in the attitude of a physical being, he is encountering it as a moral power. It is plain, therefore, that in this region the theory breaks down, or, to speak more correctly, ceases to be applicable. It is plain that in its room there must from this point be substituted another and in some respects a contrary theory,—a theory which will lift suffering up to a higher platform, and give to the element of sacrifice a distinct and positive place in the development of humanity.

Note 16, Page 168.

It has often appeared a strange circumstance that Mosaism, which professes to differ from surrounding religions as the supernatural from the natural, should seem to want what nearly all natural religions have,—

Digitized by Google

a doctrine of immortality. This, indeed, is the very point which Bishop Warburton has made the basis of his elaborate apologetic work. He maintains that the doctrine of immortality is entirely absent from Mosaism, and he asserts that this proves the divine legation of Moses. A nation living without any hope of a future state, in the midst of nations enjoying such a hope, is found to exhibit a moral purity which these are unable to reach, and this itself furnishes a testimony to the God-given mission of her lawgiver (Warburton's *Divine Legation*).

Dr. Mozley, however, will not accept the fundamental premiss of Warburton (see his *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 169). He will not admit that even in the distinctively Mosaic period men were left without a certain notion of immortality. He maintains that wherever there is a true belief in God, there must be to some extent the belief in a future state. To believe in God, he says, is to be related to God; and to be related to God is to be in connection with something which is above the mutations of time, and incapable of decay. He finds, accordingly, that the Mosaic belief in God served to its votaries as a revelation of immortality, and must be taken by us as supplying the place of any distinct doctrine on the subject in this part of the Old Testament. He admits, indeed, a distinction between the Jewish and the heathen view of immortality: the latter had an *image* of the future, the former only a notion of it. But while in this respect

Digitized by Google

the heathen vision was more clear, it was decidedly less deep. The Jew had no image of immortality, because his conception of immortality was anchored to the conception of Him of whom he was forbidden to make a graven image or likeness; and if it was thereby deprived of its influence over the poetic imagination, it received a stronger and a more permanent hold on the instincts of the religious life; the Judaic belief in immortality was the Judaic faith in God.

Note 17, Page 171.

The immortality of the soul in the pre-Christian world was not a doctrine of practical religion. There are two things which we ought carefully to distinguish,—the power of the *belief* in immortality, and the power of immortality itself; the latter necessarily includes the former, yet the former may exist without the latter. The latter is distinctively a Christian possession. The pre-Christian nations felt the power of believing in immortality; the Christians felt the power of an impelling immortal life. We have admitted that the mere belief in immortality confers a species of power, but it is quite a different species from that which is conferred by the spirit of Christianity. The belief that there is a life beyond the grave must be a source of comfort to every weary and wounded heart, and the sense of comfort is in

Digitized by Google

itself a power of calmness to the soul. But if this be nothing more than the belief in something future, —if it be simply the hope in a world which is to come,—the very calmness which it brings will keep the soul from the practical work of life; it will be a power of quiescence, not of action. In point of fact, this is what we find in the pre-Christian world, at least in those parts of it not sunk in the sensuous enjoyments of the hour. The future was everything; and, except as a preparation for the future, the present went for nothing. Hence the tendency of pre-Christian philosophy was to subordinate practice to knowledge, and to assign to the calm of contemplation a higher place of eminence than to uprightness of outward action. The Eastern mind, in particular, tended towards lethargy in all that concerned the progress of the world's practical interests; and although the future which that mind contemplated was rather a future of personal absorption than of personal glorification, the picture of the coming absorption was more vividly realized in the imagination than the images of actual things.

Now, when Christianity came into the world, it came to reverse this state of matters. It proclaimed the new doctrine,—new at least in the circle of religious thought,—that the all-important time was not the future, but the present. It proclaimed that the doctrine of immortality, whether it were held in the form of a personal absorption or a personal

Digitized by Google

glorification, was now to enter upon a fresh stage,—that it was no longer to be the belief in a power to come, but the vision and fruition of a power which had already come. It told mankind that it was possible to make the best of both worlds, though in a very different sense from that in which the saying is commonly used. It said that this world might be transformed into the other world, might catch a breath of the higher atmosphere, might kindle with the light of purer skies. The hope which Christianity proclaimed was not simply the hope of days in heaven, it was the possibility of days of heaven upon earth; and in the proclamation of that prospect it lifted the doctrine of immortality from a belief into a power. What, for example, does Paul mean when he says, 'That we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings'? Does he mean by the power of His resurrection, simply the comfort which such a belief yields? In part doubtless he does, but that is the smallest part of his meaning. When he speaks of Christ's sufferings, he does not emphasize merely the *belief* in His sufferings, but the *fellowship* with them; that is to him the power of Christ's sufferings. So, in like manner, when he speaks in the same connection of Christ's resurrection, he must be understood to refer to the power which a human soul receives from being participant in that resurrection, from being already partaker of the spirit which in the Son of man had con-

Digitized by Google

quered death, from having an evidence of immortality in the consciousness of being 'risen with Christ.'

When, therefore, Gibbon attributes to the doctrine of immortality a very great influence in the propagation of Christianity, we agree with him; but it is an altogether different question whether we can agree with him in making that influence a secondary cause (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 15). Our view of this subject must be determined by the meaning we attach to the word immortality. If we take it in the old natural or pre-Christian sense,—that is to say, if we simply understand it as conveying the idea of a future life,—its influence in the propagation of Christianity was undoubtedly a secondary one, for in this respect it does not constitute a distinctive feature of Christianity; it is something which the Christian possesses in common with the heathen. But if we take the word immortality in its distinctively Christian sense, if we understand it as implying not merely the proclamation of a future state, but the present entrance into a higher life, or, in other words, the communication to the world of a higher spirit, we shall reach a more satisfactory explanation of the power wielded by this doctrine in the gospel system. In this case, however, we shall no longer be able, with Gibbon, to call it a secondary cause; we shall be obliged to acknowledge that it has been the manifestation of a directly divine influence, and shall be compelled to

Digitized by Google

refer its triumphs to the immediate action of a celestial life.

Note 18, Page 185.

Amongst the vistas of perspective opened up by the doctrine of a risen Head of humanity, may perhaps be reckoned the suggestion of a rational basis for the efficacy of prayer. The exaltation of the Head of humanity establishes a medium of sympathy between the life of man and the central life of the universe. Now it is clear that the preliminary requisite for all prayer is just the establishment of such a sympathetic medium. The first difficulty of prayer which the mind of the inquirer has to encounter, lies in the seeming gulf of distance between the human and the divine; there are other, and, from a scientific point of view, more important difficulties, but in order of time this is the first. We want to know how a power so vast, so stupendous, so incapable of being measured by the soul, can yet be capable of answering its prayers. The answer to a man's prayer implies a knowledge of what the man needs, and a knowledge of what the man needs implies a sympathy with human nature itself. Where is the key to such a sympathy to be found? it clearly can only be found in the assumption of an incarnation, that is to say, in the belief that the power at the head of the universe is also the Head of humanity.

Digitized by Google

In point of fact, it will be seen that wherever the unaided light of nature has appropriated a God who is the hearer and the answerer of prayer, it has only appropriated Him by unconsciously assuming that very doctrine of incarnation which Christianity makes the conscious and deliberate basis of its system. In the doctrine of a risen Head of humanity, man is brought into actual and immediate contact with the universal central life, the fountain from which all blessings admittedly flow; and a chain of communication is established between human need and divine power, which removes the preliminary obstacle to the possibility of prayer.

If we pass from the preliminary obstacle to the subsequent difficulties of the subject, we shall find that the doctrine of a risen Head of humanity supplies at least some important suggestions for the solution of the vexed question. For one thing, it by supposition puts the petitioner in immediate contact with the topmost link in the chain of law. It enables him to ask an answer to prayer, not in violation of the laws of nature, but through the laws of nature, for it professes to put him in sympathy with the fountain of all law. In relation to spiritual blessings the influence of the doctrine is still more direct. The mind of man is placed in immediate communion with a divine humanity, which is supposed to be the recipient of its human weakness, and the imparter to it in turn of its own divine strength;

Digitized by Google

the realization of such a thought would alone be sufficient to establish the efficacy of prayer. Nor does the suggestiveness of the risen headship end here. What a vast number of our prayers depend for their answer on the minds of others!—when we ask for anything temporal, we nearly always ask for something which directly or indirectly depends on the actions of our fellow-men. Now it is here that the force of the risen headship comes in. If you accept that doctrine, you have accepted the belief in the existence of a common medium which is uniting your mind to the mind of your brother man. You have recognised the presence of an element to which you are both joined, and which, because you are joined to it, is able to join you to one another. You have entered into a thought by which you can understand how an influence may be brought to bear upon the heart of your brother, tending to the course of action which your petition has desired. There is a remarkable passage in one of Emerson's essays, which seems to us to have a striking bearing on this point. We cannot at present put our hands upon the reference, but what he says is somewhat to this effect: 'If you are anxious to come into contact with some special human being, you need have no disquietude on the matter; if there be in your heart a real sympathy with him, you may be sure that the element which is in him is in you, and will bring him to you.' This is a very bad rendering of a

Digitized by Google

thought which its author expresses with his wonted epigrammatic power. Our first impression in reading the sentiment was a feeling of surprise that the doctrines of Pantheism could be made to minister so much comfort to a human soul; indeed, it seemed as if here the power of providence were more forcibly represented than in the systems commonly called orthodox. But when we came to consider the matter, we found that the view here enunciated, however available it might be to the Pantheist, was in reality an essential part of the Christian consciousness. We found that it was directly involved in that doctrine of the headship of Christ which forms the very root of the Pauline theology. No Pantheism can more perfectly explain the possibility of union between kindred minds than can this doctrine of the divine headship. If two minds are united to the same centre, it is clear, to begin with, that they must be united to that centre by reason of a common element. If the centre to which they are united be in itself a source of power, it is further clear that it can perfect that union of which, by supposition, the elements already exist. The vista of perspective which such a view presents is commensurate with the drama of human history. Christ, in the Pauline theology, is not only the Head of the Church but the Head of the state; nay, the state is ideally, though in a very different sense from that of Hildebrand, only one department of the great ecclesi-

Digitized by Google

astical kingdom; the saints are to judge the world. There is therefore a scientific basis for the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come.' It is built upon the conviction that nations, like individuals, are attached to a common Head, and therefore potentially in connection with one another,—a connection which sooner or later must make itself felt in the world, and which is no more capable of dissolution than is that divinely human headship which is the source of its being.

Thus far, then, the doctrine of a risen Head of humanity must be viewed as a contribution to the natural view of prayer, as supplying a scientific basis to that which in the light of nature is a simple instinct or aspiration. There is another direction, however, in which this doctrine affects the natural view of prayer, and in which it affects it rather by way of modification than by way of confirmation. The light of nature—that is to say, the religious consciousness of the pre-Christian world—does not attach any condition to the efficacy of prayer; it thinks of the Supreme Being as being satisfied with the petition simply because it is a petition, and not from any respect to its character and contents. But the Christian doctrine of the risen headship limits the range of a man's petitions,—it makes it no longer possible for him to believe that God will answer every desire of the soul merely because the soul puts its desire into words. When a man realizes himself as a member of the risen body of Christ, he no

Digitized by Google

longer feels himself at liberty to pray without reference to the wants and desires of others; his unity with Christ has made him one with humanity, and the interests of humanity must henceforth be appropriated as his own interests. The Christian sense of the petition, 'Thy will be done,' is a new and a modifying factor in the idea of prayer. The Christian sense of that petition is not simply the Mohammedan sense, in which the soul resigns itself to the inevitable will of an irresistible power; it is not so much resignation as acquiescence. It implies that the soul, in becoming a member of a divine organism, has ceased even to desire its own pleasure at the expense of the universal good, or, to speak more correctly, has ceased to admit that such a state of things would be a pleasure. It has found its personal joy in the universal joy, its personal advantage in the welfare of the whole. To purchase that joy, to secure that advantage, it is willing to surrender its own will, to give up its own life, to part with those things which it once deemed the essence of its existence. Its prayer, 'Thy will be done,' is really a sacrificial act. It is that process of personal surrender by which it realizes itself as only one member of a great divine life, whose being and well-being must consist in the closeness of its union with that life, and which has found, by experience, that the closeness of this union depends on the intensity and the reality with which the soul abandons its selfishness.

Digitized by Google

Note 19, Page 191.

The answer to this deistic objection has been indirectly given in Note 17, where we have endeavoured to point out what constitutes the distinctive power of the Christian doctrine of immortality. There is a remarkable expression in Heb. vii. 16: 'The power of an endless life.' The point of the phrase lies in the word 'endless.'[1] It is not simply said to be a future life; that which is endless must, strictly speaking, be present as well as future. We sometimes use the expression 'the endless sea;' what we mean to convey by such a phrase is not the notion that the sea is spatially infinite, but the idea that it is practically unbeginning,—that we cannot point to any region of the globe, and say, This is the commencement of the ocean. Strictly speaking, an endless life is a life to which we cannot imagine a limit. That which begins to be is not philosophically endless; we can see an end to it retrospectively, though we may not be able to find one prospectively. The idea of Christianity is that the Christian becomes recipient of a life which, however new it may be to him, has been of old for ever, the life which constitutes the essential immortality of God. To say, therefore, that such a life is endless, is to say far

[1] The Greek word literally means indissoluble, incapable of being broken up.

Digitized by Google

more than that it is prospectively unending; it is really to affirm that we are unable even in thought to conceive the moment when it was not, or the possibility that it should cease to be. If this view of the subject be accepted, the power of an endless life will mean in Christian morals something very different from the power exercised over the will by the alternatives of future happiness or future misery. That these alternatives do exercise a power, is beyond all dispute; nay, we are disposed to think that there is a period in every man's religious consciousness when they exercise the only power. There is a time in the religious life of man when in all sincerity he puts the question, 'What shall we have who have left all and followed Thee?' and when he can only be satisfied with the promise of 'houses, and brethren, and sisters, and wife, and children, and lands.' This is the stage of life in which immortality is only a motive. But then this is only a preliminary stage. It is not the final form of the soul's administration; it is merely a provisional government, intended to prevent disorder until such an administration can be formed. The final form of the soul's government is one in which immortality is not simply a reigning motive, but a dynamically motive-power. We may make our meaning quite clear by an illustration. A man's physical life may be said to be the power which moves his arm, and it may, in a dynamical sense, be called his motive-power, but it is quite

Digitized by Google

different from his motive. He may have a thousand motives for moving his arm; strictly speaking, he has only one motive-power — the force of the physical life which lies within it. Let us apply this to the Christian conception of immortality. A life has come into the world, bringing to the soul, and perhaps even to the body, of man a force stronger than the physical. This new life is professedly the breath of a higher atmosphere, a spark of that vital principle which animates celestial spirits; it is, in short, immortality itself. To say, therefore, that a soul is animated by this principle, is very different from merely saying that it is urged on to action by the hope of a future state. That hope and a thousand others have doubtless a share in stimulating its progress, but this is not a hope at all; it is that which makes hope a possibility, it is the spirit of a new life, the sense of rejuvenescence, the glow of a vital warmth, which, by diffusing itself afresh over the whole man, makes him a new man, fills him with higher susceptibilities, inspires him to nobler aims. Hope, even in its grandest form, lies in advance of the life; the Christian power of immortality lies already behind the life, and impels it forward on its way. It is not itself a motive, but it is the source of all motives, the reason for all high flights of fancy, the cause of all lofty impulse, the ground of all pure emotion, and, above all, the fountain from which flows the stream of all unselfish enthusiasm.

Digitized by Google

Note 20, Page 195.

When we speak of one thing existing for the sake of another, we stand on the borders of that much-vexed question,—the doctrine of final causes. It has been too hastily assumed by some men of science, that the doctrine of final causes has been excluded from the sphere of physics. It seems to us, indeed, that the modern system of scientific investigation has not extruded the *fact*, but simply the old form of teleology. It has deserted final cause in one aspect only to take it up in another. The life of nature in modern science exhibits a perpetual struggle of tendencies; Matthew Arnold calls God Himself a stream of tendencies. But a tendency is the leaning of an object towards some particular end of its being, and the end of an object's being is the final cause of its existence. The forms of animated nature struggle towards the realization of a special type: is there anything unscientific in the assertion that the attainment of this type is the final cause of their being? It will not be maintained by any man of science that its attainment is an accident, for science is professedly the elimination of accident. It will be admitted by all to be the result of law; it will be held by some to be the result of a law of life by which the type has actually evolved itself from its embryonic existence in the germ. If it be so, why should it be

Digitized by Google

unscientific to say that the type is the final cause of the germ's being ?

But here we are met by the great objection. We are told that nature must ultimately rest upon a law, and not on a purpose. Final cause demands a purpose, and purposes in nature are unscientific; the ultimate source of all things must be sought in the presence of an underlying principle or law. But now, with reference to this scientific view, we would ask if the theist does not also hold by the necessity of a principle behind all things, behind even the teleological purpose. Does not a purpose in point of fact always presuppose the existence of a previous state of being ? A human purpose, taken in the abstract, is simply a man's determination to follow out the existing law of his nature. When a man says, I intend to live for myself, he expresses, in the popular opinion, a purpose which makes him selfish ; in truth he does not, he only expresses a purpose which proves him to be already selfish,—gives utterance to the existing bent of his nature. The end of every man's will is nothing more than the realization of himself, and his will or purpose will be good or bad according as the law of his being is good or bad (see Bradley's *Ethical Studies*). Even the youth's choice of a profession, if it be an unbiassed choice, is simply the objectifying of that ideal which has hitherto constituted his estimate of happiness, and a man's ideal will always be found to be the measure of his previous attainments. If we ascend

Digitized by Google

into the sphere of theology, we are forced to retain the same line of thought. Every theist attributes a purpose to God; but no theist will deny that there is a principle or law lying behind the purpose, and, in a logical sense, existing before it. The purpose which the theist attributes to his deity is not an arbitrary one, but one which grows out of an already existing divine nature. The God of Descartes, indeed, is a being who has no reason for His acts beyond the fact that He wills them; but just on this account the God of Descartes is only half theistic. True Theism must postulate behind every purpose a principle in the divine nature which dictated the purpose, must find in the background of every act of God a reason in the eternal nature of things which made that act the fitting and necessary product of supreme benevolence and wisdom. The only difference between the scientist and the theist is this, that while the former seeks the ultimate law of nature in the world of physics, the latter expects to find it in the constitution of an infinite mind.

The question, then, between the evolutionist and the theologian narrows itself down into this issue,—Is the primal force of the universe of the nature of matter or of mind? This is the question which Dr. Martineau has so ably and so zealously laboured to answer. We gather up some points of his defence of spiritualism from occasional papers in the *Contemporary Review*. He says that the two crucial elements

Digitized by Google

in the scientific doctrine of evolution are the unity of force and the principle of natural selection. Beginning with the former, he maintains that if there be only one force in the universe, it must be a force which, by its nature, is capable of comprehending all the others, and that the only force of such a capacity with which we are acquainted is mind. He points out that the very idea of force is essentially a mental conception. Our only notion of power is that which we derive from the perception of our own energy. We feel within ourselves a determination of the will to carry out a certain line of action, and we are conscious of exerting force in the accomplishment of our determination. We attribute to the changes in nature that element of causative energy which we have felt within ourselves. If we had not previously felt it within ourselves, it could not have been suggested by the transmutations of nature; these would have passed before the eye as changes and nothing more; we would have been quite unable to say that the one was caused by the other. Dr. Martineau would certainly have agreed with Hume in resisting the opinion of Locke, that the idea of power can be reached by reflecting on the mere material changes which are observed by the external senses. If sensation and the reflection on sensation be the only sources of our knowledge, Hume is logically right in saying that we have no idea of power. But as it is patent to Dr. Martineau and to all other men that

Digitized by Google

we have an idea of power, that writer is equally logical in rejecting the fundamental premiss of the sensational theory. He perceives certain changes in the world of nature, and he associates these changes with the idea of force or power; but it is all the time quite clear to him that his idea of force or power is not derived from the changes in nature, but imported into them by the mind itself,—that if there were not within himself the notion of active will, all the transmutations of the universe put together would never bring him one step nearer to the realization of the thought of one object being the cause of another. Force is a conception of the mind, and we have no conception of it outside the mind; it is therefore unphilosophical to conclude that our idea of force can have been evolved by subtle combinations of matter.

When Dr. Martineau comes to the subject of natural selection, he finds that in this also there is involved the idea of mind. The law of natural selection is the principle that the best or fittest shall survive. This presupposes two things,—that there *is* a best, and that with a view to realize it there is a tendency to competition, both of which are of the nature of mind. We would add, both of which are of the nature of teleology. The existence of a standard of comparison is itself the existence of an end towards which life is supposed naturally to lead; the existence of a spirit of competition is itself the

Digitized by Google

recognition of that end as that which makes life worth possessing. The idea of a better and a best would be impossible, unless there were already supposed to exist an ultimate good, which is the object of life's attainment; better and best are degrees of approximation, and approximation means the drawing near to something. That something to which they draw near either actually is or is conceived to be the end of life, the thing which makes life desirable, the condition which renders existence worthy to be lived. The principle of natural selection, therefore, seems to us to imply and to presuppose an anterior principle of teleology, the fashioning of nature after a certain type of excellence, towards whose realisation and illustration it is the province of nature perpetually to strive.

From such a standpoint as this there would be no difficulty in holding the doctrine of evolution consistently with the belief that man is the final cause of the earthly creation; for in the doctrine of evolution, as here exhibited, the completed whole is already implicitly involved in the incipient germ-cell. An interesting question here occurs. If man be in this sense the final cause of this earthly system, will the doctrine of evolution deprive his moral intuitions of all their value? This subject has been very ably treated by Dr. Martineau, and his conclusion is somewhat to this effect. We have certain intuitions of God and immortality which the scientific evolu-

Digitized by Google

tionist pronounces of no authority, because they are only the offspring of natural development. But in reality this does not weaken their authority at all. How do we measure the value or determine the function of a clock? Not assuredly by the rude efforts of mediævalism to estimate time, but by the latest modern developments in the art of clockmaking. So, in like manner, if we are asked to tell the function of nature, to estimate its worth, to determine its final cause, we shall not be justified in looking only at its beginnings. We only really know what nature is when we have seen its latest product, when we have followed it out to its furthest limit of development. It matters not how far removed the end is from the beginning, it matters not how many intermediate links lie between the beginning and the end; the beginning only gets its meaning from our vision of the end. Man has intuitions of God and immortality. The man of science tells us that these are the result of evolution, that they are the latest development of a germ-cell. Be it so; then they are the function of the germ-cell, the final cause of the lowest product of nature, and it would not be unscientific to say that, looked at from this point of view, the lowest product of nature exists for the sake of God and immortality.

We have presented in a somewhat paraphrased form the reasoning of Dr. Martineau on this important subject, and we have only to add the testimony of a

Digitized by Google

writer not less acute and not less unprejudiced by anti-scientific bias. Mr. F. H. Bradley, after declaring himself a believer in the doctrine of evolution, maintains that to preserve that belief it is necessary to preserve teleology; and finds that the very notion of evolution must perish unless we postulate the thought of one underlying substance holding already in its beginning the prophecy of its development and end (*Ethical Studies*, p. 173, note). Let us take this opportunity, though it is somewhat irrelevant to the present topic, of recommending this admirable book to the perusal of all philosophical students. It is professedly occupied more with the moral than with the religious sphere, yet it powerfully suggests to the mind how easily the conclusions of the most transcendental philosophy yield themselves into harmony with the evangelical doctrine of membership in a divine life.

Note 21, Page 199.

The fact that modern science has found it necessary or expedient to start upon its work of investigation with a hypothetical conclusion already reached, is in some points of view a very significant fact. It shows that, by the admission of modern science itself, the imagination can no longer be excluded from the sphere of scientific investigation. There was a time when it seemed as if the region of poetry and the

Digitized by Google

region of science must for ever remain with a great gulf fixed between them, and when, in consequence, it was held that the prevalence of the one would be the destruction of the other. The result was, that for a long time poetry and science looked upon each other in the light of natural antagonists; and as in all religion there necessarily lurks a strong poetic element, religion came to share in the feeling of antagonism. It looked upon the advance of science with a jealous concern, and felt that every fresh discovery in the mechanical sphere was a new nail driven into the coffin of its primitive intuitions. Religion may now, however, congratulate itself upon a changed attitude of science towards the sphere of the imagination. Poetry, banished from many of its former haunts, has found an asylum in the home of its old enemy. Mr. Darwin himself is not afraid to admit that his system of evolution is as yet only a hypothesis, and the admission is certainly suggestive. The hypothesis in question, whether it be true or false, is assuredly one which demands a very vivid imagination in him who conceives it. If it be admissible to investigate the facts of nature with a foregone imaginative theory in our minds, why should it not be admissible to make that theory a theological one? We do not blame the man of science for entering on his task with a hypothesis already in the mind. Science always works with a professed end in view,—the discovery of a principle of unity. We

Digitized by Google

do not think it strange or unnatural that a vision of this end should prefigure itself at the beginning; we only claim the same privilege for the studies of the theologian. The theologian has the same end as the man of science. He too seeks a principle of unity in the world of nature and in all worlds; he too aims at the reduction of all things to one common law. The principle of unity which he seeks is, doubtless a different principle from that sought by the man of science, but it is not, therefore, of necessity a principle contrary to the man of science. The theological solution, if it be a real one, must be one which shall conquer not by excluding the results of research in other departments, but by finding within itself a legitimate place for these. All we would ask is, that to the theologian, as to the man of science, there should be accorded the privilege of imagining at the beginning the completion of his work, of coming to his task with an image already in his mind of a possible and hypothetical goal to which his footsteps may be led as the final result of his labours.

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
3 9015 06387 9814

Digitized by Google